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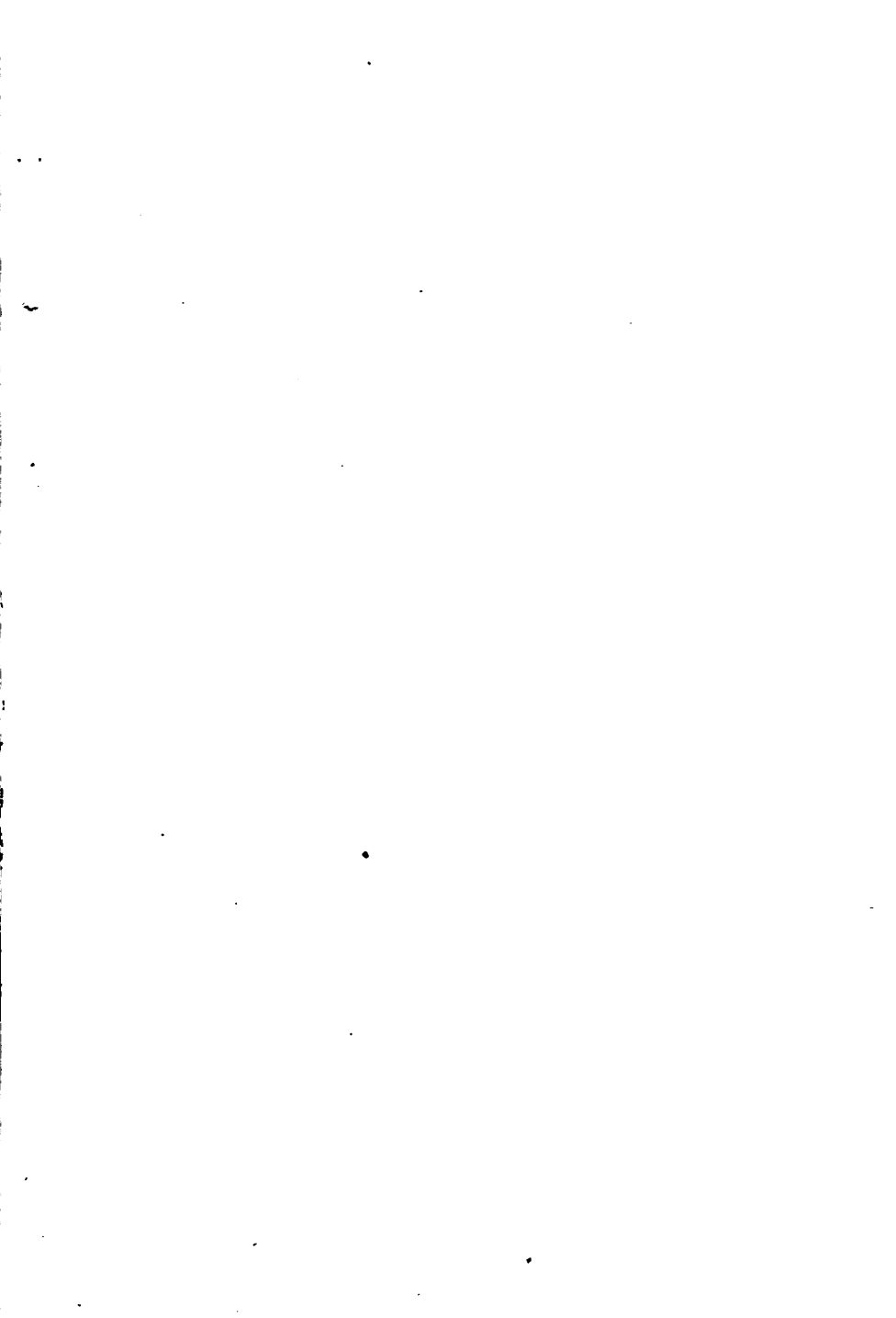
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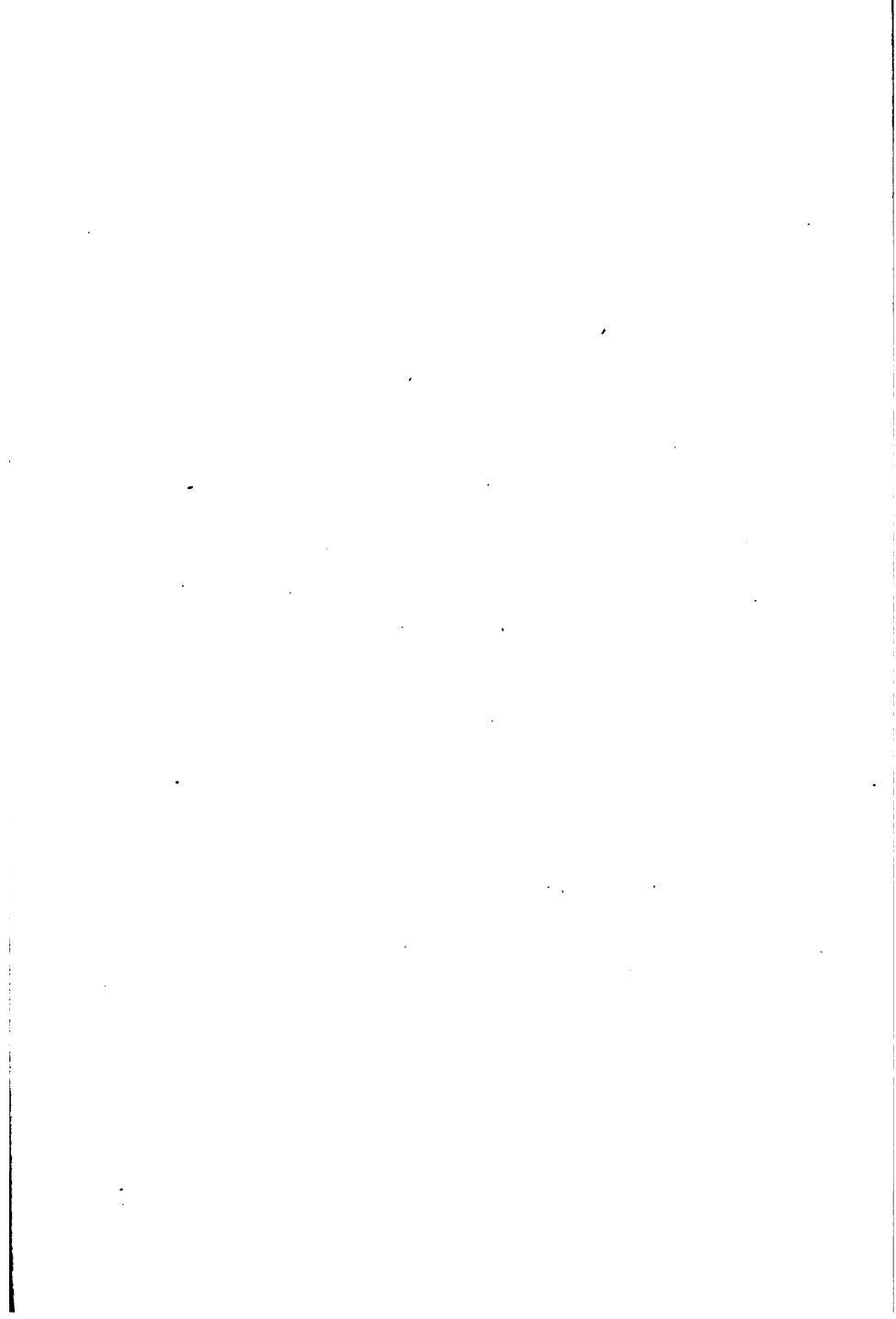
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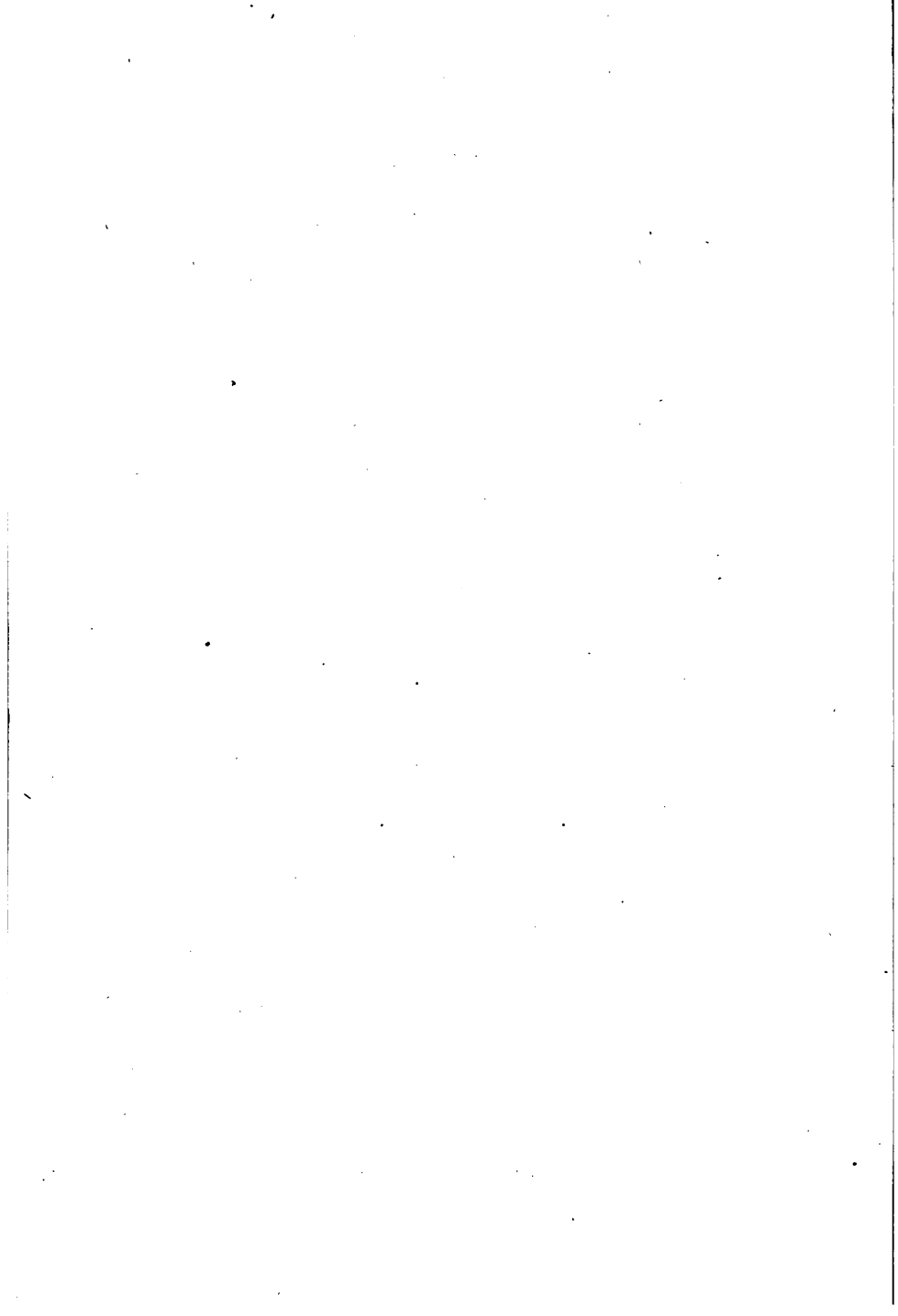
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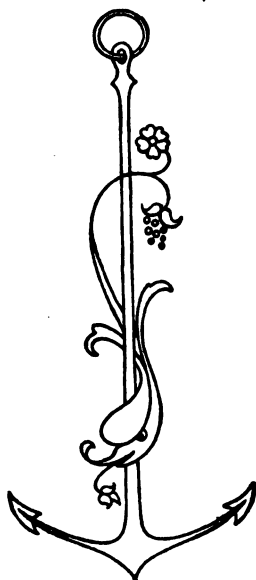


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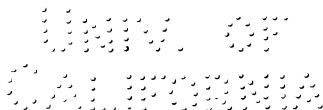
THE PETTISON TWINS

BY
MARION HILL



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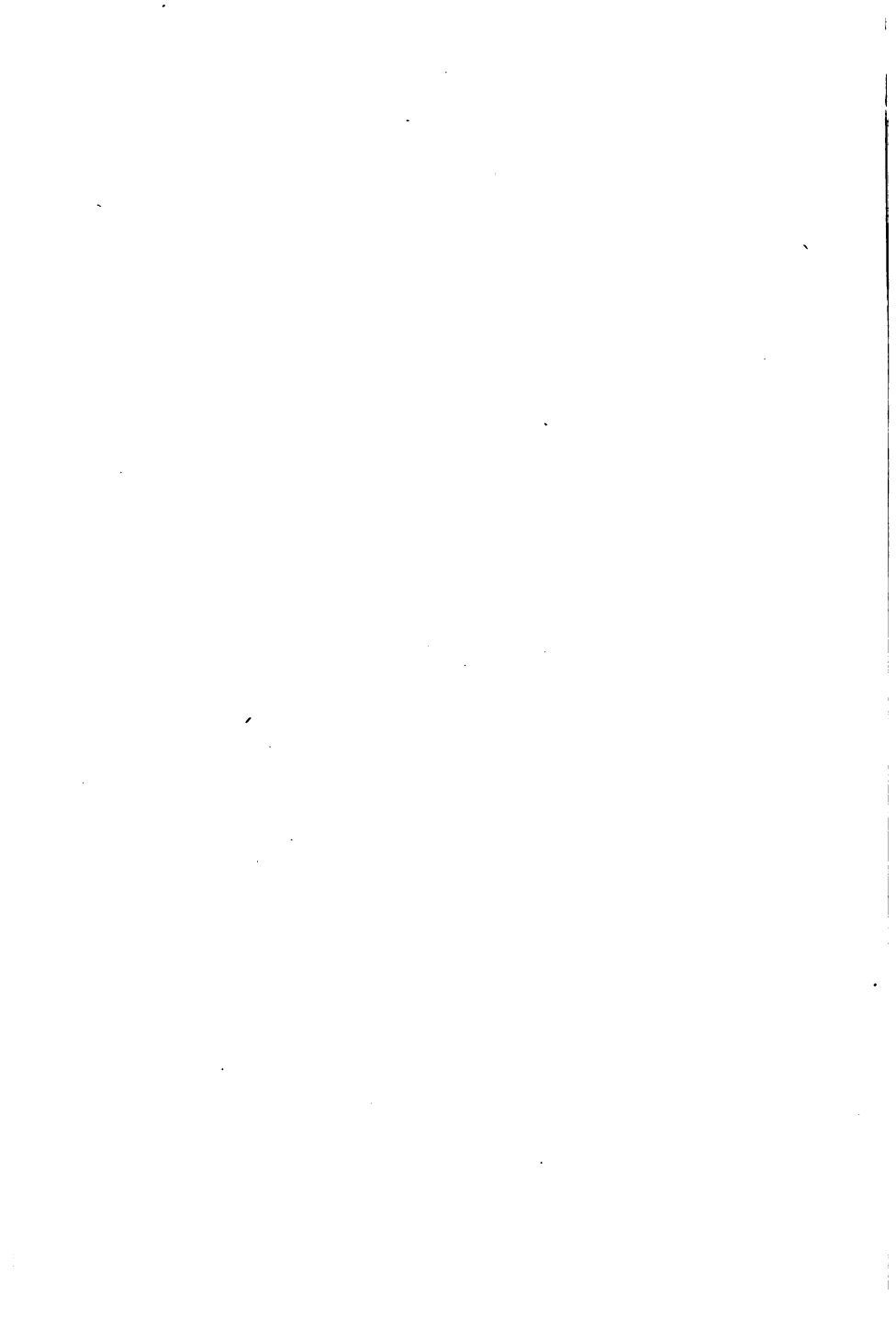
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THE PETTISON FIRSTS



THE PETTISON FIRSTS

THE little Pettison twins sat in the nursery eating the daily morning orange. It was an inevitable and impressive function and deserves to be capitalized, **THE DAILY MORNING ORANGE.**

It was not given to them as a treat but to aid digestion, and they were told to take only the juice and on no account the pulp. As a consequence the twins loathed juice and hankered for pulp. This latter they had to chew well and keep for maternal inspection to back up their guarantee that they had not swallowed it. So afraid were they that any might get away from them that they deposited each mouthful in their tiny hands, and heroically held on to the disconsolate wads. The whole performance was a mighty horror to them.

"What's this we're doing?" demanded Regina, calling a halt on her chewing long enough to fire

her sulky question at her brother. She wore a scowl an inch thick.

"What's what?" counterdemanded Rex, also chewing, also sulky, though to a lesser degree, for he had certain resources of the mind that his sister lacked. She lived always in the horrible present, while he sometimes harked back to the softened past. "What's what?"

"*This?*" and she very viciously exaggerated her jaw movement.

"Ah-h-h," purred Rex, the joy of definite occupation clearing the sulkiness from his face. He obligingly angled in his memory, a remarkably retentive one, and soon fished forth his word—

"Masticating."

"Humph," grunted Regina, deepening her scowl as she ruminatingly chewed up the word with her pulp.

Their mother was bringing up these, her first offspring, according to the most beautiful, cast-iron theories, and "baby-talk" had been sternly tabooed from the very beginning; it therefore behooved Regina to draw often upon her brother for

what she forgot. Mentally he was a wonder, not so much in the realm of pure thought, perhaps, as in the lower plane of abstract memorizing; what he heard once was his forever, and he could always repeat it verbatim with an air of wisdom, whether he understood it or not.

The orange thankfully finished, both children sat looking at the cup-like rinds of the despised and wholesome fruit.

"What do they look like to you?" asked Rex, thoughtfully.

Not being any more desperately imaginative than he was, she did not answer prettily that they looked like "golden boats" or fairy hats," or even "cute little doll dishes." She dispassionately surveyed them and delivered herself of this cautious verdict: —

"They look like orange peel."

Rex cast her a glance of grudging admiration. He liked an orderly mind, though it gave him extra trouble now and then.

"What picture do they look like?" he patiently amended.

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Thus kindly steered, Regina at once arrived at the right place.

"Look like the picture of the toy scales in last Sunday's paper."

"Let's make some."

They proceeded with as much calmness and method as if they had been planning the thing for weeks. From his pockets the boy took a knife and two pencils with which he set up the T-frame for his scales, and the girl pulled out enough hair from her tow-coloured braids to serve as string to suspend the cups of peel. They soon had their weighing machine going at full blast, using orange pits for weights and bits of pulp for merchandise.

They were having a good time, a matter so difficult of accomplishment with them that it is a pity they should have been disturbed. But they were.

Their mother — a pretty young woman always neatly dressed and finished off with an extremely high white collar, no matter what the heat, the cold or state of affairs — entered the room with a smile on her face and a watch in her hand. The

smile was as much a thing of winding up as was the watch, for Mrs. Pettison was governed utterly by a book she possessed on "Ideal Motherhood," and it advocated constant smiling at children as the surest and purest means of making the little ones "radiant." Nature had not disposed the twins to "radiate" sufficiently, and consequently Mrs. Pettison smiled at them most painstakingly. But Mrs. Pettison was not discouraged. She was a member of The Mothers' League, and the leagued mothers all testified that since the abolishment of spanking, these saner and sweeter methods are slow in effect and require patient repetition.

Therefore, whenever Mrs. Pettison looked upon her offspring, whether in love or in war, she beamed beautifully, as now.

"Come, come, children," she gurgled, "put away that nonsense and take your nap. *All* GOOD little boys and girls take a nap before dinner." The emphasis upon "good" was deliciously lilting. Her voice ran up and down several hills of glee.

But the twins remained stolid and refused to be unworthily cajoled.

"Oh, we do not have to sleep to-day, do we — not to-day?" wailed Regina, in the voice of one who was being drawn and quartered.

"Why not to-day?" still smiling.

"Why, I thought that as you and Pa were go —"

"I and *who*?"

"You and Pa were —"

"*Who*?"

Such a nice, wide smile went with this word that Regina knew something serious was the matter, so she gazed at Rex for help. He very kindly mouthed something which enabled her to proceed.

"You and *Papá*," she said, giving a violent French accent to the paternal title.

"Ah!"

"That as you and *Papá* were going away on the train to watch Uncle Edward die, perhaps we might stay up."

"We do not go away until this evening. Moreover, with good old Catherine in the kitchen, and

a trained nurse (whom I am looking for every minute) to attend to you children and the baby, I expect the household affairs to go on to-day and every day exactly as they do while I am here. So run away to sleep, both of you."

Gloomily, Regina wandered to her mother's side and deposited in the maternal palm her damp and clammy wad of orange pulp.

"It is well — masticated," she said wearily.

Rex followed suit.

"I masticated, too."

Hand in hand, they turned away.

"Remember, no talking," called their mother after them, and they could feel her smile playing up and down their backs.

It being a rule in the Pettison family that children should make some sort of a vocal response to every remark made to them, the twins chorused vaguely, "Yes, Mama," and continued their wretched way to the bedroom.

They shut the shutters, pulled down the blinds, and then disposed themselves upon their separate cot beds.

They were obedient children, but still more were they literal; and as to them the forbidden "talking" meant conversing in the natural voice, they therefore exchanged thought in sibilant whispers with consciences free of offence.

"Do you hear that, Rexie?" came purling from Regina in a most pianissimo plaint, as she referred to some cheerful sounds which floated in from the happy outside; "do you hear that sort of thumpety-lick, thumpety-lick? That's Hattie Carse and her new cousin with the skipping rope. They are jumping pepper-salt-mustard-vinegar. There! She's missed on vinegar. Vinegar's awful easy. I can go to vinegar any time I want. Dear me, if I was only out there, I'd show them!"

She tossed miserably on the bed and tugged at her braids, veritable life-lines in time of trouble.

Rex, short-haired, saved himself from insanity by exercising his legs. He kicked — not with passion, not with pain, nor with pleasure. He simply and rhythmically kicked. Once, a fascinating rattle from the street petrified his legs high in air, like two fence posts, as he hissed, breathlessly: —

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"Just listen, Regina. There is Harry Mason's hook-and-ladder wagon. I wonder if he's asked the Pratt boy to play fire with him instead of waiting for me? We'd built a little house of logs in the empty lot and were going to set it afire and then put it out. If they do it without me, I'll — I'll — I don't know what. Oh, gee! oh, gee!"

"Why is 'gee' a bad word?" demanded his sister, propping herself upon an elbow and hoping for the worst. But a burst of boyish laughter from outside so distracted Rex that he could but wail: —

"Oh, why does the fun you're out of, sound so much funnier than when you're in it?"

"Because it is funnier!" settled Regina, going to the heart of the matter like a true woman. "Oh, why do we have to sleep in the daytime?"

"We don't sleep," observed Rex, who was never too agonized to be precise.

"Is there any way to make you sleep when you can't?"

"Count sheep going over a gate. They have to

jump pretty high, and get down soft on the other side. Start in."

A long silence; then, in a wailing whisper:—

"All my sheep have gone over, Rexie!"

"So've mine."

"And have you gone to sleep?"

"I'm widerer awake than ever — wide awaker — widerer awaker."

"So'm I," said Regina, heartlessly uninterested in the er-problem which was racking her brother's brain, and out of which he rescued himself by announcing in a relieved tone:—

"Wider awake."

They wriggled through the rest of the wretched hour as best they might, until their mother came in with watch, smile and cheerful bangs of shutters, and regulated another form of diversion for them.

"Jump up, little sleepy-heads! Jump up! It is time now for you to play."

There was no jump in them. The word play coming from its present source held no promise of skipping rope or fire patrol. This the twins well knew. They rolled to the edges of their cots and

dropped to the floor, where, with the air of martyrs, they took off their shoes and stockings. Then they picked a barefooted and precarious way downstairs to the front yard, and among the hidden "prickers" of a fair-appearing lawn, until they reached an irrelevant sand-pile which disfigured one corner of it. Upon this they ensconced themselves, sitting in silence, prodding their sulky little toes into the dirt and permitting the sun to beat upon their sulky little heads. The thought of an hour of this hilarity was stamped in anguish upon their countenances.

While they were in the height of their enjoyment, a young woman opened the garden gate and started up the path to the house. She stopped when she saw the children. She wore glasses, carried a dress-suit case, and when she spoke it was in the tone of one who held her business to be important. It was Miss Cumby, the trained nurse. The knowledge that she was worth twenty dollars a week increased her natural force of character.

"Is this Mrs. Pettison's?" she demanded crisply.

"Yes," snarled Regina. Regina had had all that she could stand.

"And we are the twins," supplemented Rex, to forestall a question always sure to be asked.

"Oh, you are the twins, are you?" said Miss Cumby, as she kept her gaze glued to Rex's face, fascinated by its misery, and never so much as included Regina by the turn of an eye. Rex, who was as modest as literal, felt impelled to decline some of the honour, and so said, drearily: -

"No, I'm only one of them."

"And I'm the other," groaned Regina.

"Indeed? And why are you so unhappy?"

"Dunno."

"Is there anything the matter?"

Regina rolled her eyes at Rex.

"No, I think not," he answered dubiously

"Except sitting here."

"Why do you sit here, then?"

No answer.

"What in the world are you doing?"

"Playing," snapped Regina, and her tone fully suggested "you idiot!"

"Ah, it is pleasant to be barefooted, is it not?"

"No," firmly remarked Rex.

"It's just as nasty as nasty!" growled Regina.

"Then what do you go that way for?"

Regina had a hazy knowledge, but, as usual; she had lost her grip on the words, so she prodded Rex with her elbow as a signal for him to go ahead.

He angled again in his memory and eventually got it all out.

"The earth has electricity in it. Electricity is good for boys and girls, but it can't bore through boots, so we go barefoot. Then we get sunlight and fresh air and electricity, and it all does us good."

"Without doubt, without doubt," asserted Miss Cumby, nodding professionally. She went on to the front door, and the twins surveyed each other long and commiseratingly.

Rex trotted out his new possession. "The household affairs," he said, thoughtfully, parroting his mother's words, "*will* go on just the same."

"I guess yes."

They "played" for half an hour more, and then Miss Cumby, in complete uniform, even to the

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white cap, bore down upon them. In her hands she carried two tea-cups.

"It's the hot water!" hissed Rex, melodramatically.

His sister nodded, ejaculating under her breath, "Well, of all the funny dresses!"

"Here's your hot water, children," said Miss Cumby, smiling carefully in accordance with recent instructions. "Your Ma sent it out to you."

"Our Mama," sighed Rex, correctively.

"She said you must be thirsty."

"We are," scowled Regina, "but not for hot sloppiness!"

This struck Rex as being the cleverest kind of repartee, and he began an enchanted giggle, which was frozen dead at its birth.

"Little girl," rasped Miss Cumby, smiling fiercely, "hot water is better for you than cold. Either drink it or do not drink it. There is no necessity for being unladylike and impertinent."

Regina curled up like a crushed caterpillar. She had tried the new nurse and had been downed. Rex, visibly impressed, thought it safer to declare

himself at once upon the side of the newcomer, which he did by saying reproachfully: —

“I’m surprised at you, Regina. Cold water is bad. It hurts the digestion and lowers the — lowers the —”

“Temperature!” chirped Regina, quite cheered by this, a rare proficiency. “Temperature! I remember it from ‘temper.’ Hot water gives you ‘temper’ and cold water gives you temperature —”

“And lowers the temperature of the stomach. Oh, Regina (this with rapturous abandon), do you remember the *heavenly* time when we were on the train and had to drink ice-water from that thing in the corner?”

Regina answered by gasping like a trout, and clapping both hands upon her abdomen.

Miss Cumby glared at her new charges as if she considered them a bit uncanny, and, concluding that decision was a trump card to play, said briefly, “Lunch!” and led the way to the table.

The Pettison meals were marvellous. Everything was so hygienic that it was horrible.

To-day's menu consisted of bran gruel, with gluten bread. Next came graham monstrosities labelled "gems," and certainly as hard. Oatmeal tea helped to wash these down. As entrees came soft-boiled eggs, so soft that their hatching qualities were quite unimpaired. Dessert was in the form of tapioca pudding, made without eggs, milk or sugar.

The method which ordered the table reigned serene throughout the house. Even the hurried packing made necessary by a peremptory summoning to the bedside of a dying relative was accomplished decently and in due time, so that when Mr. Pettison arrived from the office his grip was in readiness for him, his household was running smoothly, and warranted so to run for a week or more, and his wife was hatted and cloaked for the journey.

Mr. Pettison was an old young man with a weakness for grey suits all the year round. He was a trifle under-sized, and consequently wore his hair very pompadour indeed. In public he was a grey nonentity. At home he was a godlike genius.

Even the fact of its being as late as seventeen minutes to train time did not cripple his executive powers.

"Has the baby had her crying spell this afternoon?" he demanded of Miss Cumby.

"Oh, no, sir. She is sleeping quietly."

"I'm sorry. Crying is a baby's exercise. It develops the lungs and establishes a good heart action. Wake her up, if you please, and let her have a cry."

"Very well, sir."

"You know how much she weighs?"

"Twelve pounds, five ounces."

"If we are not back by the end of the week, weigh her again and send us the result. A normal baby should gain at least four ounces a week. Sometimes ours does and sometimes she does not. We are dissatisfied with her growth. You have been told about the preparing of her food?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the sterilizing of her bottles?"

"Yes, sir."

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"And you understand that she must never be fed oftener than once every three hours?"

"Yes, sir. You may depend upon me to attend to everything."

Miss Cumby looked so capable, not to say superior, that Mr. Pettison omitted further directions and saying, "Come along, Mrs. Pettison," exactly as if, instead of being poised for flight, she was clinging to the perch, he grabbed up the grips and they were off.

Miss Cumby's letter was sent at the end of the first week. In it she reported a fair amount of success; praised the efficiency of Catherine; admitted the obedience of the twins; confessed that they lacked much of the required radiancy, being very melancholy of countenance and unenthusiastic about their play; regretted that the baby had gained only three and three-quarters of the normal four ounces; chronicled that she had waked it daily for its dole of crying; told that she had refrained from giving it food any oftener than once in three hours; charged them to have no uneasiness about the household; asked after the lin-

gering relative, and signed herself theirs respectfully.

It was a comfortable letter, and made things easier for Mr. and Mrs. Pettison during their enforced absence. At the end of the second week they heard nothing at all. Then they telegraphed, but received no reply. Pitying their frantic demands, the hotel clerk made a more thorough search through his pigeon-holes and apologetically produced a letter which had followed the first by twelve hours. It was from Catherine's sister. Miss Cumby had fallen down stairs, fractured her thigh and had been removed in an ambulance. The fright had given Catherine nervous prostration and symptoms of brain fever, so that she had been taken to her own home. In the meanwhile old Celia, the coloured wash-woman, had undertaken to look after the children, and would Mr. and Mrs. Pettison please come home immediately.

Immediately, and more than a week had already passed!

Fatherhood and motherhood the world over will sympathize with the distracted pair during

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their return journey. Never before had the train stopped so often or so long in getting to their town. Never before had the street cars crawled so shamefully in covering the distance from the depot to their street. Never before had their feet been so tardy in getting from the street corner to their own front door. Even the key stuck.

They entered and paused. The house now reverberated. It sounded like a kindergarten at a cakewalk. Following the shouts, the Pettisons tore to the kitchen. Celia was there with the baby. Celia bellowing, the baby cooing. As for the twins, they were "radiating" in perpetual grins and shouts of laughter. There, also, were six or seven coloured men and women sitting around sociably upon the chairs, tables, gas-range and ice-box, and all talking together. These latter at once took an unobtrusive departure.

"Whee-e-e, Maw!" yelled Rex, tugging at her skirts.

"Whoopee-ee, Paw!" screamed Regina, striving to shin up the paternal leg.

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Then, both together, "Look at baby. Look at little toddy-wiggle making goo-goo eyes!"

"Haw! haw! haw! Mis' Pett'son!" boomed Celia in echoing guffaws. "We suttinly ben havin' the time! Mighty glad yo' had yo' visit out. Knowed yo' could trust ole Celia, didn' yo'? Well, I raikon!"

She was vigorously shaking hands with her patrons. She only needed one to hold the baby, so ample was her generous black form that wherever she pressed the lucky, comfortable infant, there was a bulgy, soft shelf for it.

"What has happened? How have you got along? Tell us everything," gasped the Pettisons.

"Oh, g'way, Mis' Pett'son! G'wan upstairs an' tek yo' things offen yo', an' I'll mek a cup o' tea — fust. Hyar! yo' two chilluns, leave yo' Paw and Maw be twel they git they breff. Chase yo'sefs! G'wan! How offen yo' want me to tell yo' the same thing twice? Chase!"

Grinning and obedient, the twins "chased," and virtually the mother and father did the same. Celia seemed to be in command, and things appear-

ed to be in safe and sound order — and, after all, why shouldn't they take their travelling garments off and know the comfort of some home-made tea?

Half an hour later, after a hurried inspection of the house, which satisfied them that everything was more than ordinarily beaming and blissful, the Pettisons called Celia into the sitting-room to have her explain her methods of obtaining such desirable results.

"Did the older children take their daily nap, Celia?"

"Yas'm. Oh, yas'm." Celia's replies were rich and unctuous.

"They took their nap without trouble?"

"No trubble 't all. Yas'm."

"I am agreeably surprised. How did you manage it?"

"*I din' manage hit, Mis' Pett'son. Dey manage hit dey own sels. Dey tore an' rampage 'roun' so consid'rubble dat dey' jes' nachelly drap mos' anywheres and go sleep.*"

"What? With no regularity of time or place?"

"Oh, yas'm. De reg'larty was suttinly 'markable."

De time was alluz meal-time, an' de place was unner de dinin'-room table."

Mrs. Pettison bit her lip and looked worried. "Dear me, how terribly unmethodical! What exercises tired them out so completely?"

"I raikon 'twas playin' in dat dere hummock o' dirt."

"Strange! They are not always as keen about that as I would like."

"Yas'm. Yo' kain't put a pot on a col' stove an' say, 'Now, bile.' Yo' has ter mek a fire unner hit; an' chilluns kain't pley less dey wukkin'. So I tell um how pity 'twas dey parents won't let um move dat dirt over t'other side de yard; an', toreckly dey hear dat, dey start smack in to do hit, an' dey jes' shovel an' putter in dat dirt twel domesday, 'less I call um in to eat."

"Ah, about their eating — were you particular about their food and was their appetite good?"

"Scan'lous good. It shore kep' me on de jump scoopin' up de pickles for um' and puttin' sugar on dey braid an' butter."

‘Oh, Celia! *Celia!*’ cried Mrs. Pettison in dismay.

“Yas’m,” grinned Celia, taking Mrs. Pettison’s expression to be the amazement of too much pleasure.

Discreetly dropping the unlucky food question, Mrs. Pettison took the safer ground of praising Celia for her beneficent effect upon the twins’ usual gloom, and asked her what sunshine she employed to bring about the sweet result.

“I done tole um dat ef dey kep’ a-goin’ ’roun’ *me* lak dey had de stummickache, I’d jes’ nachelly fray de hides offen um,” said Celia, rolling her eyes fiercely, like a tragedy queen. “Co’s’e, Mis’ Pettison, yo’ unnerstan’, I was on’y talkin’ in parables, but de parables wukked, an’ dey cheered up amazin’. Dey done lose dat colicky look right off.”

Here Mr. Pettison broke in explosively. He had been weighing the “toddy-wiggle.”

“She has gained over a pound!” he cried, with incredulous glee.

“Dat all?” mourned Celia. “Humph! Po’ lil’ lamb ac’ jes’ lak she half starve when I tek hol’ of

her. So I fill her up good. Ever' time she open her lil' mouf I done stick in a bottle. Dey ent been a cheep outen her."

"You did not make her wait three hours between feedings?" gasped the mother in a frenzy.

"Don' yo' frazzle yo'sef, Mis' Pett'son," said Celia, soothingly, "I din' mek her wait three minute ef she ac' lack she want some mo'."

"Goodness gracious me, woman!" burst in Mr. Pettison. "How in the world did the little one digest so much? Did you wake her up to cry?"

Celia thought she detected sarcasm and rolled her eyes at him reproachfully.

"'Deed I's'nt no sech a fool, Mr. Pett'son. What yo' tek me for?"

"And the bottles — the bottles!" interrogated Mrs. Pettison, feverishly. "Did you sterilize them twice daily, Celia?"

Celia looked badly stumped.

"Stai'lize? How dat — I ent know 'bout dat wo'd 'stai'lize.' "

"It means to boil — to make surgically clean. Do not say that you neglected to clean them."

"Clean um?" said Celia, bellowing in her relief. "Co'se I clean um! Ent goin' to give no baby alive dirty bottles to feed outen!"

"But *how* did you clean them? What was your process?"

"I processed same lak I wash anything. I swish um 'round good in a mess o' soapsuds. Den I rensch um. Den I stick um on nails in de fence to dry in de sun."

"On rusty nails?"

Celia looked for the first time worried and at fault. "I ent know yo' want um stuck on rusty nails, Mis' Pett'son," she said apologetically. "No one done tol' me dat."

"Oh, I did not — I did not!" wailed Mrs. Pettison, wringing her hands.

Celia cheered again and bellowed. "Den jes, yo' quit yo' worritin' Mis' Pett'son. Yo' might know I'd wash um right!"

"It can't be helped, Celia; you did your best. But to sterilize a thing you have to boil it."

"Humph! Stai'lize mean bile?"

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"Yes. We boil every single thing the baby puts into her mouth — twice a day."

Celia's eyes bulged.

"Yo' bile dat lil' lamb's fingers twicer day? Oh, g'way, Mis Pett'son, yo' sholy foolin'?"

Mrs. Pettison's bewildered eyes followed Celia's to the sofa, where the youngest Pettison lay serenely sucking her hand.

The Pettisons looked helplessly at each other and gave the whole thing up.

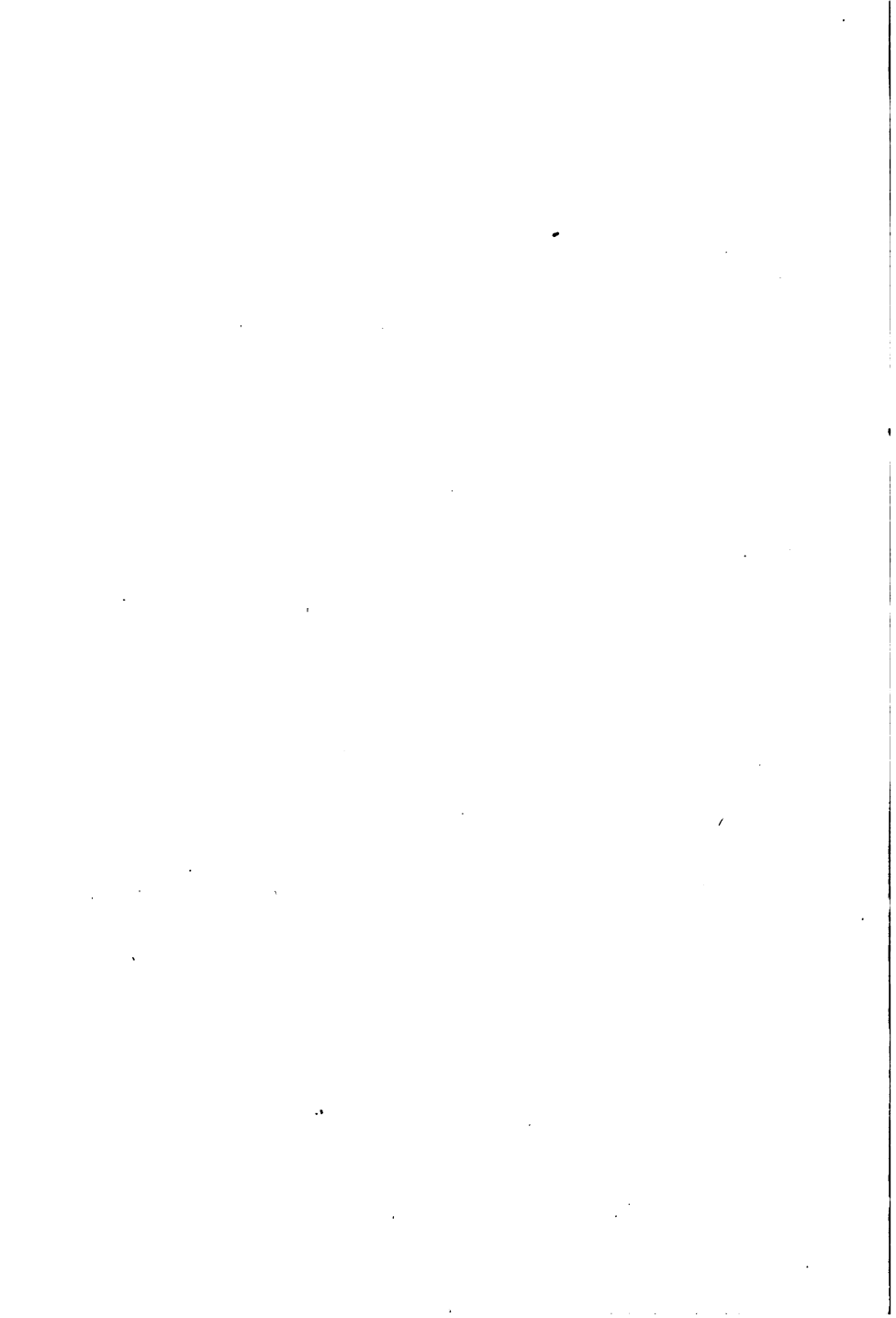
They paid Celia liberally — liberally enough to venture to ask her to go at once. She agreed, highly pleased that her methods had been worth such big money.

"An' I'll come again an' he'p yo' out, Mis' Pett'son, toreckly yo' send for me. Yas'm. Good-bye. I'se goin' home now to stai'lize my ole man a dish o' stew. Yas'm. Good-bye."

Mrs. Pettison tottered to the book-case and hunted around for "Ideal Motherhood," She felt that she could not find it a minute too soon.



WITHIN THE RING OF SINGING



WITHIN THE RING OF SINGING

ANY other children but the Pettison twins would have been hopping. The twins never hopped. What hop they ever possessed had long ago been taken out of them by their serious-minded mother, who believed that the divine mission of motherhood was to discipline all noise and microbes out of her children. Mrs. Pettison was still too young herself to have much patience with youth, and what she did not know about germs could go into a cherry-stone — and could wobble around in there, too.

The twins were antiseptically clean, inside and out, not only their tissues and apparel, but also their morals and manners.

Hop because of the delightful fact that they were going for the first time to Miss Millie's kindergarten? Not the Pettisons. And hop for anything in so public a place as the street? Gracious Heaven, what an idea!

So, while waiting for the kindergarten van to appear, the twins stood upon the curb in the front of their house unemotional as two hitching-posts, while their mother, true to her theory that spare time was waste time unless something more or less disagreeable was happening in it, improved their minds through the channel of instructive conversation.

"And, Regina — (look at me; always look straight into Mother's eyes when Mother is talking) — if slates are used and Miss Millie hands you a pencil, remember *not* to put it into your mouth. A slate-pencil which goes from mouth to mouth is sure to be infested with bacilli of diphtheria."

"Yes, Mama," said Regina, scowling dreadfully; she never knew whether these germs and things were accidental happenings, or moral faults. It was safer to meet them with a scowl.

"Bacilli," murmured Rex, skilfully catching the word on the fly and storing it in his memory. He was proud of the collection he had there. It was a fad of his to pick up large names and he

went after them as unscrupulously as another boy after marbles or a girl after buttons. "Bacilli, Bacilli, Ba —"

"And, Rex, no matter how thirsty you may become, do *not* touch a drop of water unless you are sure it has been filtered and boiled."

"Yes, Mama," answered Rex. Then his critical mind misgave him as to the affirmative and he tried "No, Mama." The negative sounding but very little better, he switched back to "Yes, Mama." Then the sudden madness to which great minds are prone, smote him and he began gabbling, "Yes, Mama; no, Mama," with a glittering rapidity.

Regina shot him a look envious and admiring. She would have sold her soul for a share of the philosophy which enabled Rex to turn naggings into intellectual orgies.

"Regina — (how often do I have to tell you to look at Mother?) — a clean handkerchief? have you one?"

Crimsoning under a horrible doubt and knowing that it generally saved time to search the most

unlikely places first, Regina began to claw up her sleeves, in her guimpe and down her shoes, gathering speed as her ill-luck grew, until she plucked as frantically as if she were pin-feathering herself for a wager.

Rex, who had been a fascinated watcher, here interposed tenderly.

“Why don’t you try your pocket, Sister?”

There the linen was found, and with a gasp of surprise, and relief, Regina rammed it further down to keep it there. She never intended to use it. To her harassed young mind, a handkerchief was solely something which you had to produce when anybody called your bluff, and as its cleanliness or non-cleanliness largely decided the issue, she preferred to rub her moist little nose on anything handy, rather than mar the whiteness which grown people were so particular about.

Mrs. Pettison coldly looked her disapproval of the flurry, and as coldly turned to Rex, anticipating the same scene. But he was ready for her, and a pantomime followed, dignified enough to go to slow music.

Fixing his beautiful melancholy eyes upon her, Rex produced his handkerchief immediately. More, he unfolded it. More, he took it delicately by opposite corners and turned it leisurely from front to back and from back to front again. Then he folded it with geometric accuracy. Then, in obedience to some imperceptible assent in his mother's rather bewildered gaze, he replaced the handkerchief in his pocket and erased the whole affair from his conscience.

At this point the van occasioned a diversion by appearing suddenly round a corner and stopping at the Pettison's, filled to the brim with chattering atoms, among whom the twins were hastily packed, and as hastily driven away.

"We thought you did not believe in education upon lines quite so giddy as the kindergarten," said a sweet, acid voice to Mrs. Pettison.

Two neighbours had appeared upon the street with brooms, ostensibly to sweep their walks, but chiefly to watch the off-going of the van. Mrs. Pettison kept a girl and did not have to sweep her own

walk, and this may have added acidity to the sweet voice.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Bascom," returned Mrs. Pettison kindly, and the very kindness hinted surprise that Mrs. Bascom had dispensed with the formality of a greeting. "My little ones are making only a trial visit. Young as they are, they are sensible enough to know whether or not the kindergarten is going to help them, and they are to give me their verdict upon their return. I am in hopes that the symbolism of the kindergarten may counteract the influence of their severely practical bringing up."

"She is in hopes that she may get them safely tied somewheres so that she can do a little gadding herself," confided Mrs. Bascom to the remaining neighbour after Mrs. Pettison had re-entered her house. It is no wonder the ladies were slightly riled — Mrs. Pettison's husband got no more salary than theirs did, yet she was able to keep a girl, to dress in trim shirt-waist and spotless white collar, and to use such words as "verdict," "symbolism" and "counteract" at an hour in the morning when one's self and one's speech are excusably in negligee.

"Like as not, like as not!" assented the other, a big, gloomy woman with a past (twelve children, all either buried or married). "Them faddy kind of folks that starts in by not letting their young ones play round in a place bigger'n a pint pot, most generally turns 'em loose on all creation 'fore long, jes' to get shet of 'em."

Meanwhile, the pair who were the innocent subjects of this confab, were having troubles of their own. Miss Millie had told Rex several days before that he might bring with him to the kindergarten any little boy or girl who might be benefited by such a visit, and Rex, who had settled upon Jakey Hart for his guest, was finding it difficult to persuade the driver of the van to stop for his friend. The trouble was that the driver knew Jakey already and had spent a short lifetime in dodging Jakey's attentions, which ranged all the way from cobblestones to carrots. But Rex was so insistent that Jehu finally relented and turned into the unsavory alley where Jakey and Jakey's ilk were ever to be found.

Little trouble was there in finding him, either,

for he had remembered his date and was waiting in readiness.

"Whoa! stop the hearse!" he yelled huskily. "This here's th' stiff yer lookin' fer! Whoa! I say!"

"All aboard for the morgue!" was his manner of signifying that he had climbed in among the startled young cherubs who were to be his companions for the morning.

Except that they felt rather hot and conspicuous, the twins found the ride pleasant. Rex was particularly impressed with a little girl called Angela. Not only was she pretty and curly-headed and wriggled all the time, but she slapped a little boy and made a face at him. Rex had heard of such things but had never before seen them. He was charmed.

When the bunch of children arrived at the kindergarten, Miss Millie was at the door waiting for them, and to each she said, "Good-morning, Paul, good-morning, Angela," and so on down the line, to the embarrassment of all and the anguish of some. It was a dreadful thing to have to answer "Good-morning, Miss Millie," whether they wanted to or not, and a frog always got in their throats

so that they croaked at Miss Millie when croaking was farthest from their wishes. Moreover, to say good-morning in that public way upset their muscular economies and made an arm or a leg do something of its own accord. But for the twins it had no terrors. Not only were they able to say any number of good-mornings without a tremour, but they were filled to the brim with pleased-to-meet-you's, and were ready to use either or both at the drop of the hat. "Good-morning, Regina."

"Good-morning, Miss Millie."

"Good-morning, Rex."

"Pleased to see you, Miss Millie."

"Is this new little boy your friend, Rex?"

"No, Miss Millie."

"Which of you brought him, children?"

"Oh, I *brought* him, Miss Millie, but he is not my friend. He is the friend of the garbage gentleman and rides on the garbage-wagon, and sometimes he comes into our back yard and upsets our ashes, so I asked him to the kindergarten."

"And I am sure he is very, very welcome," said

Miss Millie in the *Froebel*est voice she could muster.

"And what is your name, little boy?"

Jakey grinned.

"His name is Jakey, Miss Millie," twittered the twins.

"Good-morning, Jakey."

Jakey grinned.

"*Good-morning*, Jakey."

Jakey grinned harder.

"Children, Jakey feels shy, so we must not expect too much of him. We are sure that he *feels* good-morning in his heart."

At this the corners of the shy boy's mouth all but met at the back of his head, and Miss Millie felt it to be wisdom to send her flock to the ante-room to remove their wraps.

They each came out with a shrill "toot! toot!" and proceeded to scuffle madly around the room like a "choo-car." One may do lots of nice things at a kindergarten for which one gets spanked at home.

Miss Millie looked at them nervously and dejectedly. She was always tired and wore the air of

one who finds the present uncomfortable and the future doubtful — like a wet hen. Even her friends said that she had gone into the kindergarten business because she could do nothing else. She could do that only so far as books took her — no further; and had not her heart been truly child-loving, her poor, empty head would have got her into trouble long ago. At a crisis of noise the books recommend the “voice” of the piano, therefore, when she saw her chance to be heard, Miss Millie said insinuatingly:

“The piano will soon speak, children.”

The twins and Jakey, who had all three in their character of newcomers been round-eyed and mute, looked interestingly at the piano to see where the phonograph was attached. They looked in vain. And when Miss Millie struck the instrument it gave forth only the thug usual to pianos.

At the sound most of the infants stood still and folded, or tried to fold, their fat little arms, but the rest continued to cavort madly around.

Miss Millie thugged again and said sadly:—

“The piano has spoken twice, children.”

At this, all but Paul came to a decorous stop. Paul had Angela's apron-strings as reins and was bellowing an incessant "Gid ap!" Angela looked pained and happy — pained because she was somewhat of a spectacle, happy because Paul was very much of one.

"The piano is speaking to Paul now." Thug.

Paul dropped the reins as if they had become hot. He ducked his blushes into his tie and tried to pull his thumbs out of their sockets.

The piano spoke next in the tones of a lively march, and the little ones filed around the room and took places upon a brown circle painted upon the floor. Down they sat, Turk-fashion, and in forty-seven different keys broke into a cheery warble, "Good-day, little bird, good-day!" inclining their heads first to the left and then to the right.

Though the twins sat down and wagged their heads with the rest, the whole performance appealed to them as unworthy the dignity of the human race. To sit on the floor was bad enough, but to bob your head at your friends and call them "birds" was worse. Regina had once called Cathe-

rine, the maid, a bird and served in consequence a six-days' sentence of zweiback and boiled water. Jakey neither sat nor sang, nor did he bob. Like a tow-headed Napoleon he stood with folded arms and surveyed unsmilingly the antics of his fellows.

The bird business over, the children scrambled to their feet and sang a squirrel song to the wriggling of their fingers. All through the melody there intruded a guttural murmur on the order of a "rag-bottle-sack-man's" call. When she could stand it no longer, Miss Millie faced around from the piano and said with cloying gentleness:—

"Paul has two voices. One is a very, very sweet one, and the other is, oh! so harsh! Sometimes he forgets and uses his harsh one! He has forgotten again. Haven't you, Paul?"

"No," chirped Paul, inconsequential as a robin, and jumping up and down as if to an invisible skipping rope. "Didn't forget. Did it on purpose."

The twins looked for the roof-tree to fall and were astonished to find that Miss Millie merely

put on a sad smile, following the smile by a beaming burst:—

“And now, children, let us take our little seats at the table and listen to a blackboard story.”

In a twinkling of an eye all had taken possession of tiny red chairs and seated themselves around a low table which seemed to the twins to be sadly abused by penknives, it was so marked up into squares and triangles. Miss Millie propped a book against the blackboard and from it proceeded to give an “impromptu” lesson. She first drew —

g i s m .

Pointing to “g” she began: “Once upon a time, children, a little girl called Gertie went out for a walk. This is a picture of her. You will know her every time you see her for she has a curly feather on the top of her hat. She took with her this little brother of hers” (pointing to “i”). “His name is Ibby. A strange name, is it not? Ibby. Ibby was so glad to go that he threw his cap up in the air. You can see it just above his head —”

“Bully for Ib!” This came with derisive joy

from Jakey. He had found his voice. It being policy to ignore Jakey, the story trickled sweetly on.

"They walked through the tall grass of the meadow until they came upon this" (pointing to "s"). "It was a snake, but it did not frighten them, for it was a tame snake, and it went 's-s-s,' as if saying 'good-morning, children.' "

At the mention of the snake, Angela shuddered and shook her curls over her face. Rex looked at her and she looked back at him, and smiled. A dimpling smile shot at a person through curls is a demoralizing thing, as Rex found out to his cost. He lost much of the story and only came to his senses as Miss Millie was pointing to the period and saying:—

"— they were so tired that they sat down on this stone to rest. You must always rest when you come to this mark in a story. Now, you are going to tell it all over again to me. What is this, Paul?"

"A little bitty girl with a fedder on her head."

"And what is her name, Elisabeth?"

"Name Gertie. My Momma had a nurse girl Gertie once, she did."

"And what is this, Angela?"

Angela's answer was lost to Rex, he was so anxious to get another curly smile. He got it. Again he sweltered in rapture until he was pulled up short by hearing his own name.

"And what is this, Rex?"

She was pointing to the period. Rex knew it to be a period — he could read when he was three years old — but he also knew that in a kindergarten, everything wasn't itself at all, so he hazarded, recklessly: —

"That is Ibby's hat."

"Aw, haw! aw, haw!" jeered Jakey. "You're a corker. Can't tell Ibby's hat from a stun to sit on when yer tired. Why din' jer call it er tame snake in de grass, fur a flyer? Aw, haw!"

Miss Millie was quite as much frightened by the outburst as were her young charges, so to calm them and the atmosphere generally she took her place at the head of the low table and said: —

"Look at the clock, children. It tells us that it is dream time. We are all going to shut our eyes and keep them shut for a little while. Pretty soon

a picture will come. We shall call the picture a dream picture, and when we wake we shall all tell our dreams. Now we are going to sleep. I, too."

Miss Millie shut her eyes and the obedient tots followed suit, Jakey alone presiding as spectator. A most delicious hush fell over the room. In a short time a pervading wriggle warned Miss Millie that she had better wake up. So she did.

"Oh, what a lovely sleep we have had. I can see that Angela must have had a beautiful dream. Tell us what it was, dear."

Almost bursting with glee, Angela danced to her feet and jigged blissfully while telling her slumber song. She caught her breath all through it as if strangling with too much delight.

"I dweamed I was in a garden an' in the garden was a boo'ful w'ite wose an' a but'fly flewed into the garden —"

"Flew, dear."

"— flew into the garden. A lovely, boo'ful but'fly wiv a pink wings an' wiv' a blue eyes an' wiv a wibbin wound his neck an' he flewed wite —"

"Flew, dear."

"— flew wite on to the wose an' went to sleep there."

She sat down flushed with pride but was up again instantly with a beaming addendum.

"— an' had a dweam. He dweamed of *me*!"

She giggled outright with the glory of it and sat down again, but once more was up as if her seat was on fire.

"He dweamed I had some candy!"

"It is Hugh's turn now," interposed Miss Millie rather hastily.

Hugh, a prim, pretty-faced boy, too red-lipped to look utterly trustworthy, arose with languor as if his sleep had been of the heaviest quality.

"I dreamed I was in a boat, a little silver boat, and I was on waves, little silver waves, and fishes splashed all around me, little silver fishes, and the boat shot into a beautiful wood, little silver — It shot into a wood and there was a fairy kindergarten there and the fairy teacher was called Miss Millie and she was the best teacher in the world and the prettiest."

"Very nicely told, Hugh," said Miss Millie

striving to look as little conscious as might be.

"Have you a pretty dream for us, Doretta?"

"Yes, Miss Millie," answered Doretta guilelessly. "I dreamed I was a cunning little robin red-b'est, and I had a nice warm nest high in a apple-tree —"

"An apple-tree, dear."

"— an apple-tree, and in my nice, warm nest I had two pretty, pretty eggs, and I said, 'Come see my pretty, pretty eggs,' and you said, 'Little boys mustn't never touch little birdies' eggs,' and I swung high in the apple-tree under the pretty sky and sang 'Chick-a-dee-dee, chick-a-dee-dee,' all the day long, and the apple flowers fell down on the ground and turned into little birds, and a naughty, bad cat came and ate and ate till she ate them all up."

"Oh, what a sweet dream! Now Rex may tell us his."

Rex stood up and fixed Miss Millie with his beautiful eyes. He looked the incarnation of spirituality. He looked sad, too. He knew that flowers and birds were expected of him.

"I thought I saw my mother eating mush and milk," he said. That was all. Then he sat down.

Miss Millie blinked with the flatness of it, and looked dubiously at Regina.

"I saw a picture of you," said Regina methodically, "but instead of looking black with the white window back of you, you looked white and the window black — just turned around."

Without waiting for an invitation Jakey jumped to his feet.

"My dream's a peach ! When I shet me eyes —"

"Shut, dear."

"— shet, dear. When I shet dear me eyes, I dreamed you was a cop —"

"You were."

"I were —"

"No, you were — I was."

"Well, din I say 'you was' the fust time?" demanded Jakey so belligerently that he was left unmolested. "I dreamed you was a cop — a sparrer cop — in de park and I were a yaller pup, an' when I'd git on de grass you'd swipe me wid yer club, an' wunst I cotched a holt of de club in me

jaws an' it turned into a sassige, an' I et de sassige, on the grass, too, an' you couldn't do a t'ing to me neither, cos I had yer club — see?"

Rex, who had had doubts of the genuineness of these dreams, but felt he lacked authority to say so, here saw duty stare him in the face — for was he not morally responsible for Jakey in his present surroundings?

"Jakey," he said with sad firmness, "I do not think you saw all that when you shut your eyes."

"Did!"

"I think not."

"You're 'nuther!"

"Another what?"

"'Nuther sozzling gazaboo idjit!"

"Oh, children, children!" interposed Miss Millie in a shocked hurry, "let us sing 'If We Count Ten.' Ready! Begin!"

Striking up the old hymn tune endearingly known as "Go Tell Aunt Abby," the babies rocked their little bodies back and forth and warbled impressively and with intense emphasis:—

THE PETTISON TWINS

"If *we* cou — ount te — en,
If *we* cou — count te — e — en
If *we* cou — ount ten befo — o ore we speak,
"Twill *make* ou — our answers,
Make ou — our a — an — answers,
Make ou — our answers *gentle* be and meek!"

"Now, Jakey, dear," was Miss Millie's honeyed advice, "count ten and *then* speak to Rex."

"One-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten-you're a liar," said Jakey.

Rex was mild. Rex was a philosopher. Rex had been home-trained until he was dangerously near being a detestable little prig, but his heart was the heart of a man, and he hurled himself upon Jakey with all the implacable fury of five-and-three-quarter years. Goodness knows what might have been the outcome had not Miss Millie fortunately forgot her professional sweetness and separated them with the force and precision of a ring-master. Then she put her hands together as if in prayer, laid her cheek upon them, seemingly closed her eyes, and said soothingly:—

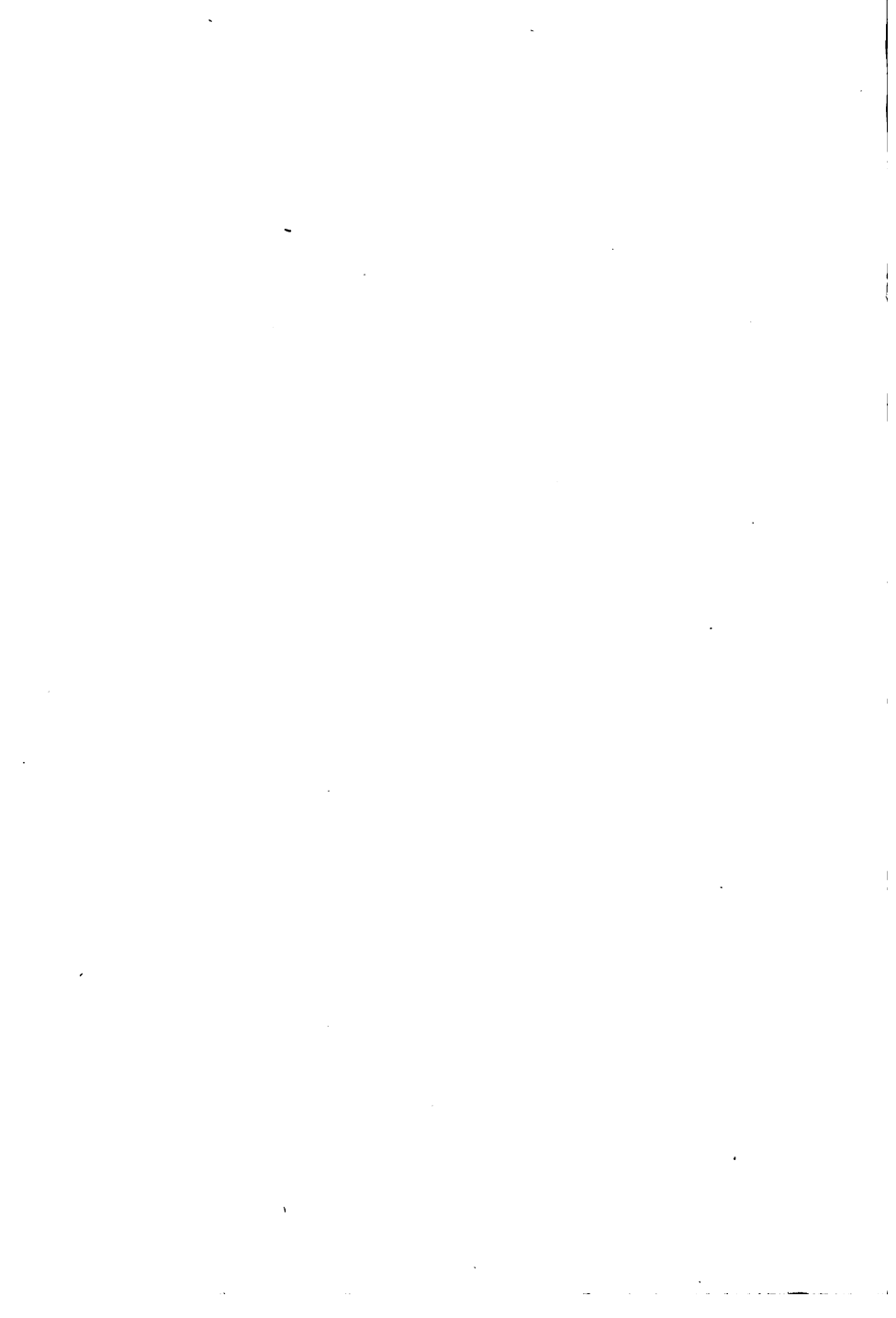
"Birds in their little nests agree. We must play

WITHIN THE RING OF SINGING

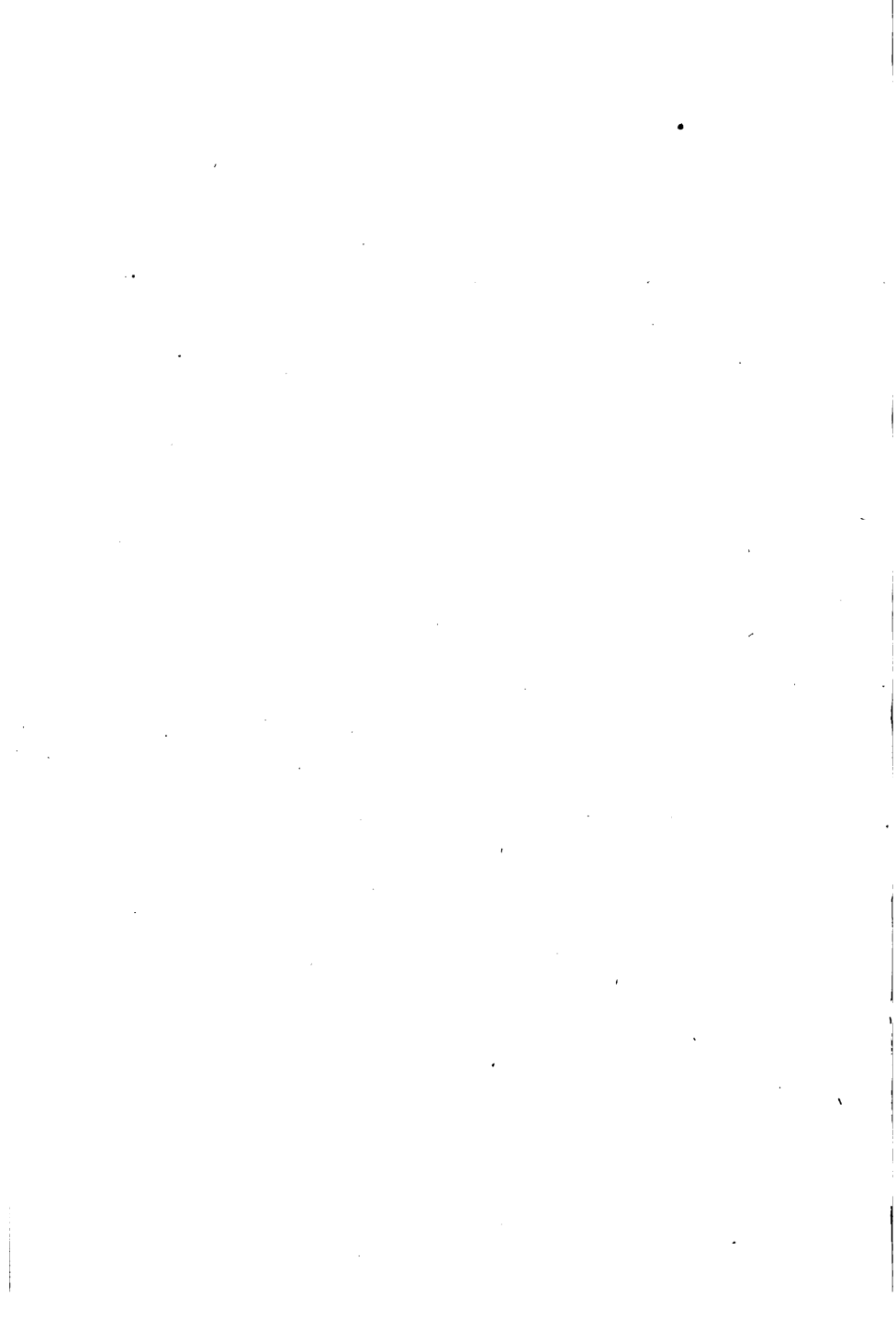
we are little birds, now, and tuck our heads under our wings for a few minutes. Like this."

The sight of the little birds finding their wings was the last straw as far as Jakey was concerned.

"Gimme me hat and lemme git a smell of air," he snorted. "I'll git bats in me belfry stayin' here. Gimme me hat."



A HAPPY LAPSE FROM PARADISE



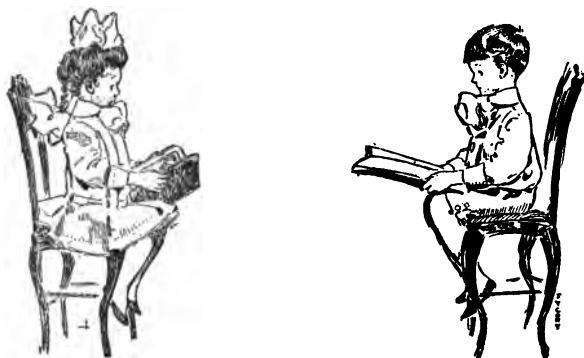
A HAPPY LAPSE FROM PARADISE

HEREDITY and environment" were words very often upon Mrs. Pettison's tongue when she talked about the future of her children, but, as she was in her inmost mind rather doubtful of the blessings she might reasonably expect from "heredity," she pinned most of her faith to "environment." Consequently, when she made up her mind that the twins had to be artistic whether they wanted to or no, she went most practically to work about it. She bought a volume of Whistler's etchings for Rex, and for Regina a richly coloured collection of pictures entitled "Children of Sacred History," and she made the infants devote an hour a day to "art," which meant sitting awfully quiet and looking fixedly at the illustrations.

To the twins, art was the crowning unpleasantness of life. Lessons and music and rigid recreations and health food and deportment were bad

THE PETTISON TWINS

enough, but art was the worst. They could have stood the pictures had it not been for their white piqué dresses. Mrs. Pettison was thorough in her methods, and knew that radiant apparel had an uplifting effect upon the mind, so each day she made the twins dainty from top to toe, as a rational



"Which meant sitting awfully quiet"

and necessary preliminary to their art hour. The starch is what upset them. Starched piqué acts upon neck, wrist, and armpit like a buzz-saw. Moreover, it is too abominably tell-tale. It keeps a tally for every time you sit down, particularly if you sit down where you should not. And the white

stockings! They were the last hopeless touch of foolish apparel. In black stockings you can do a sane amount of contraband things — on your knees — and not get caught; whereas to have on white stockings is the same as being under the eyes of detectives. No wonder that the combination of piqué *and* art seemed to the twins almost too much to be borne.

To-day, fairly creaking with cleanliness, as they entered their nursery for the art dose, they were forlornier than ever. It had been dry weather and the starch was in fine form.

“Gimme the scared history,” was Regina’s gruff order to her brother.

With his hand upon the door of the low book-case — the nursery was perfect in its equipment — he turned a pained little face in her direction. He was a pronounced purist even at that early age.

“Sister,” he said, with extra gentleness, to show that correction was a duty and not pleasure, “there is no such word as ‘gimme.’”

(“There is!”)

“You should have said ‘give me.’”

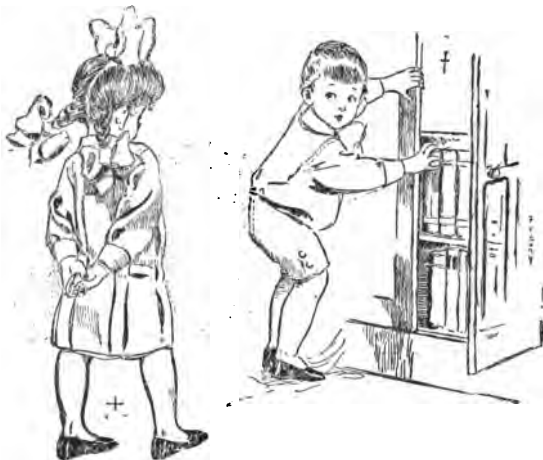
THE PETTISON TWINS

("Did!")

"And the history is *sacred*, not 'scared.'"

"Just you look at the pictures once," said Regina. "If they're not scared I'd like to know!"

She had in mind plenty of blood and slaughter.



"Sister," he said, with extra gentleness, "there is no such word as 'gimme' "

The book certainly confined itself to Biblical childhood at its worst, sacrificed upon altars, or put to the sword, or eaten by bears, or something.

He silently gave her the volume. He knew that

mood of hers. Time alone could mellow it, not present gentleness.

Each with a book, they climbed into their desk-chairs and set dutifully about their task. Their mother would soon come to superintend it. She was going to have no slackness where art was concerned. It goes without saying that neither she nor Mr. Pettison had the artistic temperament. It is always safe to assume that parents lack the qualities they are most anxious for their children to possess.

Downstairs the door-bell rang. With eyes still glued to their pictures, the children listened intently. When the front door opened a voluble voice flooded the house.

"Mrs. Gidge," announced Regina, in a pre-occupied whisper.

"Isn't it a thin-sounding name for a fat person?" meditated Rex, out loud.

The voices came nearer, showing that the visitor was being escorted to the nursery; and the twins did not like it at all. To be talked at and under and over and around, and not be allowed to talk back,

was a form of torture of which they got a great deal and to which they could never grow used.

This fate, however, promised not to be theirs, for Mrs. Pettison was putting on her hat. She was evidently going out with Mrs. Gidge. In truth, her visit to the nursery was to state that fact to the twins.

They stood, at the entrance of the ladies, and looked very little, very spotless and alluring.

"The darlings! How do you do, Rex?" clucked the visitor.

"I am pleased to see you, Mrs. Gidge. I am very well, thank you, and hope you are the same," came trickling politely from Rex. He was an all-around comfort where manners were concerned.

"How do you do, Regina?"

Regina had not the faintest idea, nor could she have put it into words, had she known. Yet something *must* be said and said quickly. All signs pointed that way. Mrs. Gidge looked expectant, Rex nervous, and Mrs. Pettison outraged. Punishment loomed on the horizon unless Regina could open her mouth and get something out.

It came.

"If I had a tail, I could walk on a tight-rope," she muttered bashfully. Both parent and visitor took it as the utterance of an imbecile and ignored it accordingly. Yet it was a coherent and intelligent observation and was reached by orderly steps. Mrs. Gidge was fat. Regina had seen a fat woman at the Fair. There was a circus at the Fair. Besides the fat woman there were other things. There was a man who walked on the tight-rope. He balanced himself by means of a stick. He waved the stick the way a cat does her tail when she is precariously travelling on a fence-edge. Regina ached to be able to walk the tight-rope. She knew she would drop the stick. A tail would stay where it belonged. Hence her remark.

The twins were banished back to their desks and were supposed to hear nothing whatever of the conversation which followed.

It was a splendid conversation, too — all about poverty and drink and wretchedness and crime and slums and two neglected little children whom Mrs. Gidge and Mrs. Pettison, as President and

Secretary of the Ministering Mothers' Society, were going to hunt up and rescue, that very hour.

"Fancy, my dear," was Mrs. Gidge's awful climax, "they have nothing to eat but what they find in garbage-cans!"

"Oh, don't; I can't bear to hear it," cried Mrs. Pettison, sick at the thought. She cast a thankful glance at her scientifically fed children.

With eyes fixed unseeing upon the infant about to be bisected by Solomon, Regina left "scared" history and mentally dove head first into a garbage-can. She found a wonderfully attractive lot of things there and quite cheered up.

"The boy, a little chap about as old as your Rex, has been driven from the house night after night, to crawl into a shed and sleep with a billy-goat!"

"Oh, poor, abused child!" gasped Mrs. Pettison, buttoning her gloves with frantic haste.

Rex heaved a sigh of gnawing envy. What luck some boys have! To sleep with a billy-goat! Who would not barter one's soul for a night of such varied rapture?

"Their only home has been the gutter. They

know nothing of refinement or decency. They simply wouldn't believe me if I were to tell them that some little boys and girls actually live in a — a — Paradise like this." Her admiring sweep of the hand indicated the nursery. "A perfect Paradise."

This room was Mrs. Pettison's especial hobby, and even at the risk of keeping the waifs waiting she could not resist the temptation of talking about it a little.

"This nursery is the most carefully planned room in the house," she said, with excusable pride. "And it cost the most, too. But we let nothing stand in the way of the welfare of our children. Our aim is to make them feel that home is the best place on earth. Look at the walls. They are finished in hard paint and are washed almost as often as the windows. Wall-paper is merely another name for grime and soot. We haven't a shred of it. Pictures are just as bad. Nor have we any carpet, to grow greasy and fusty and harbour disease. My dear, carpets are *dangerous*! Some scientists recently analyzed a bit of old ingrain,

and *what* do you suppose they found? — Thirty million typhoid germs, thirty-three million of diphtheria, over fifty million of tuberculosis, and eighty-eight million of less virulent bacilli!”

“Lord save us,” ejaculated Mrs. Gidge. “Do you make up those numbers as you go along or do you really remember them?”

Having listened to his mother intently, though covertly, Rex felt dreadfully sorry that they had no floor covering. So teeming a carpet would be a most companionable sort of thing to have around. No one need feel lonely with so much liveliness right under foot.

“The figures are correct. They were too impressive to forget,” said Mrs. Pettison. “Do you wonder that I have polished floors? And no rugs? It is the only safe way.”

Regina, with her rebellious little head ducked down into her book, questioned the safety of the arrangements. Once she had slipped on the admirable, sanitary polish and had broken her collarbone. For herself, she preferred to take chances with germs.

Here, the ladies' conversation was checked by the canary-bird. It had been doing a lot of ear-splitting chirping, and now broke into a deafening, nerve-racking, shrilly prolonged warble.

"Mercy me! dear little mite," breathed the visitor, her face all wrinkled up in spontaneous protest. "How cheerful he makes things."

"He is not here for cheerfulness alone," explained Mrs. Pettison. "The care of a pet develops child nature, cultivating responsibility, and teaching respect for the claims of the lower animals. It spurs affection and makes duty a pleasure. My children share between them the privilege of attending to the canary's needs. Rex takes one day and Regina the next. Each is too fond of the task to relinquish it entirely to the other."

During this speech Regina got the fidgets. She kept her eyes discreetly nailed to a page, but tugged at her braids with a nervousness which indicated a mind both roving and afraid.

Her mother took some subtle hint and went quickly to the bird-cage to inspect it. Her tone, as she faced about, was rousing in the extreme.

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"Rex! Regina! This poor bird is without seed or water. Whose day is it to care for him?"

Rex raised guiltless eyes, and waved a sadly, thankful hand towards his sister.

She reddened, wriggled, stood up, and was silent. Her mother was doing the talking, anyway.



*"'God-screecher' struck her
as being exactly right"*

"Regina, you grieve me. You pain Mother. Attend to the little thing at once. Your thoughtlessness is a crime when it causes suffering to even a tiny bird — God's creature that it is."

This last expression, as she understood it, seemed admirable to Regina. "God-screecher" struck her as being exactly right. The scowl with which she attended to her "pet" would have stretched it dead had it been of a sensitive disposition.

Meanwhile, Rex was dominated by the same influence which causes a murderer to visit the grave of the slain — he kept glancing backward at a flower-pot on a pedestal.

Mrs. Gidge caught him at it, and made haste to mention the thing in his thoughts — to give him pleasure.

“What a lovely rubber-plant,” she said gushingly, “and how the children must appreciate having it all for their own!”

Rex wilted. He quietly closed the book of etchings and prepared for the prompt action which he foresaw would be necessary.

“The plant has a moral more than an esthetic value,” explained Mrs. Pettison, largely — (even while his zone of danger narrowed, Rex enjoyed the word “esthetic,” and he put it into a pocket of his mind for safe keeping. He had no time to dally with it now) — “also hygienic, consuming carbonic gas exhaled from the lungs,” continued Mrs. Pettison, “but its greatest worth lies in the fact that, like the bird, it teaches the children their duty to all forms of life intrusted to their care. They

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would sooner themselves go thirsty than allow —”

She approached the pedestal. With the scurry of



*“He was back with a pitcher of water, diligently
refreshing the same”*

a weasel, Rex sped to an adjoining lavatory, and
at the very moment that Mrs. Pettison was sternly
prodding her gloved finger into the accusingly bak-

ed soil, he was back with a pitcher of water, diligently refreshing the same, while the scorching reproof in the maternal gaze seemed to sear the marrow of his embarrassed little spinal column.

Regina let out a long and loud breath of relief.

"I thought it couldn't be my day for watering the old — the pretty rubber-plant," she said, expansive out of sheer thankfulness, "because I forgot it yesterday and had to write 'Pity the herring' ten times in my copy-book as a punishment."

"'Erring, erring,'" interpolated Rex, pleadingly.

"Write! Can these babies write?" asked the visitor.

"It is as easy to teach babies their letters as to teach them pat-a-cake and kindred absurdities. Rex and Regina could write before their fourth birthday," said Mrs. Pettison complacently.



"Her eight-year-old infant was still pat-a-caking"

"I must confess to a prejudice for keeping babies babies," stated Mrs. Gidge, rather warmly.

Her eight-year-old infant was still pat-a-caking. Mrs. Pettison knew it and put it into a deprecating smile. Then the visitor left off thinking about the twins' failure to care for the forms of life intrusted to them. Which was Mrs. Pettison's intention.

"Hadn't we better be going?" sharply asked the President of the Ministering Mothers.

"Indeed we had," agreed Mrs. Pettison. "Good-bye, Rex and Regina. Mother will be back in two hours or so."

"Gracious, I thought you never left them alone," criticised the President.

"No more do I. They are constantly under adult supervision. After she has put the baby to sleep, Catherine will attend to the children by reading to them Froebel's Mother-Play. Then Miss Schmidt comes to give them piano lessons, and each remains in the room all the while the other is receiving a lesson; thus both gain the benefit of two hours' instruction instead of one."

"Ah," said Mrs. Gidge, almost in a snort. Mrs.

Pettison's executive ability was so great that she envied it. Then her usual good-nature reasserted itself and she cried grudgingly: "And to think I had forgotten baby. 'Ow is tunnin' 'ittle Toodle-Oodles?"

Mrs. Pettison arched one eyebrow in acute disapproval of nicknames and baby-talk.

"*Constantia*," she said pointedly, "though indisposed to-day, is generally in perfect health, thank you. Come, dear."

The two went. The twins had been politely standing since the first hint of good-by. Why or wherefore, they knew not. They only knew they had to. It was a custom. And it dreadfully made their legs ache, for the reason that the economic comfort of one leg was strictly forbidden. They had to use both — which made their stiff bodies sway insecurely. The distant closing of the front door liberated them, and they glumly limbered.

A clock struck. Rex took his book, put a marker at the picture where he had left off, closed the volume, and methodically returned it to the book-case. Regina viciously slapped her book shut, doubled

up a few pictures by so doing, and elbowed the whole scared business out of her way.

She hated art. She hated plants. She chiefly hated the canary, which was again ruffling its throat in wildest pipings.

"Hush, you God-screacher, you!" she commanded, shaking her fist at it.

But beyond everything she hated Miss Schmidt and the music lesson — and both were imminent.

However, fate interfered.

Constantia, who had been coquetting with colic for hours, now embraced it unreservedly, and Catherine sent word to the twins that they would have to occupy themselves as best they could until Miss Schmidt's arrival. On top of this came a message from Miss Schmidt that the lessons were postponed till next day.

Three hours at their disposal. The twins were agonized. What should they — what could they do? They were wrecks, and rudderless. They could not possibly play, because the playtime was already over — it was an inexorable hour, beginning by the clock and ending by the clock ; like

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sleep time, or dinner time, or lesson time, or study time, or bath time. No; play was out of the question. They had no wish to roam the house, either; it was too full of man-traps and spring-guns, furniture too good to sit on, floors too shiny to walk on, glass too polished to breathe on, cushions too embroidered and plumped up to lie on, books too clean and precious to be touched. Three awful hours in that sanitary barracks of a nursery, out of whose windows they could not even hope to loll pleasantly and watch the happy world, because those windows were all shuttered at the bottom and ventilated from the top.

"What *are* we to do?" asked Rex blankly, his innocent eyes as desolate as a deer's.

Mother Eve looks after her own, Regina had an idea.

"If we put on our hats and go out, we might find Mama and ask her," she suggested, beginning plausibly, but ending with a flush of conscious guilt.

Honest Rex was about to protest when he paused — thought — yearned — weakened — fell, and replied stammeringly:

"So we might."

"C'm' on, then," hissed Regina, clutching his hand.

They flew downstairs — little white angels in frantic haste. Colicky cries covered their escape, enabling them unchallenged to reach the freedom of the street. Such glittering freedom!

"Which way?" asked Rex, dizzy by reason of limitless opportunity.

"To a billy-goat," doggedly said Regina. She had intentions.

He threw her a look of startled admiration. Just so must Tancred have gazed upon defiant Sigismunda, so Pyrrhus upon Andromache the staunch. With these heroines of old Regina, too, possessed, besides the soft womanly, some of the sterner attributes — man's. She too hankered for tumultuous repose with a billy-goat. Sister of sisters! He put his feelings into a squeeze of her hand as he inquired:

"How can we find a goaty place?"

"Ask *him*," was her brilliant and immediate reply, as she pointed her finger imperatively at a junkman approaching in his foully filled cart.

This black-visaged, unwashed individual stopped his horse.

"Vat is?" he shouted gutturally.

Too polite to shout back, criminals though they were, the twins wandered into the middle of the street and stood by the cart. Rex politely raised his cap and asked in his best Chesterfield:

"Will you have the kindness to direct us to some place that is — is — er — unsanitary?"

Regina yanked him impatiently. This was no time for "language." She despised it, always.

"Where's there an *alley* with a *gutter* in it?" she demanded, flinging her nouns like knives, so that they carried understanding with them.

For return courtesy, he bored into her with his fierce eyes.

"Vat pusiness you doin' oudt py youselluf?" he demanded.

Regina recklessly but successfully branished the truth.

"We've sneaked," she said, "to try find some dirty children to play with. We'll be punished for

it. We'll go home in an hour, maybe, but not before. Where's an alley?"

"Oh, choomp," said the man, with apparent ferociousness. "Hoory. Choomp."

Regina's erratic brilliance enabled her to understand him perfectly. She "hurried and jumped," clambering upon the wagon seat. Rex meekly copied her. He was not depressed at finding himself playing a subordinate part, for well he knew that the candle of woman's wits soon blows out, when she most needs it, leaving her dependent as usual upon her natural superior. He was glad of the chance to rest his overworked intelligence. It would have plenty to do by and by.

"Pepper-eggs! Geddup!" bawled the junkman.

The horse lurched forward and with a royal jerk the twins found themselves off upon the highways of happiness.

To ride upon a rag-wagon is bliss enough, goodness knows, but to ride sitting upon a seat without a back, in danger every minute of being pitched under a horse's hoof is *too* lovely. In such a situation, one can stand even a white hat, a white

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piqué dress, white silk stockings, and patent-leather
shoes.



"With one accord, they flopped over on their nice white stomachs"

The driver was consideration itself. Afflicting the
twins with no painful adult attention, he quite held

his spotted soul aloof, and really might have been dead to the world, but that he intermittently bawled:

"Pepper-eggs! Geddup!"

"Geddup is to the horse," confided Rex in a whisper, "but I can't tell what's pepper-eggs."

"Pooh, I know," said Regina; "here's pepper-eggs right behind us in the bags."

With one accord they flopped over on their nice white stomachs, balancing themselves upon the board seat, their white legs waving towards the horse, their contented hands finding employment among the weirdly unclean "paper-rags" in the cart. Upon their faces stole the expression which Mrs. Pettison had long and in vain striven to cultivate by means of art and music, an expression sweet, gentle, esoteric, ambitious, and inspired. Something akin to the divine settled down as a last abiding grace upon their countenances when they found a pile of disreputable hats and tried them all on, dutifully.

Few things are, on the surface, unbearable. It is correlated ideas which make all the trouble. To

the twins, the old hats were simply old hats; to their mother they would have meant also strange heads and unwashed hair, and she would have suffered accordingly.

While Regina enjoyed all the rags with a wide impartiality, Rex seemed to hunt among them with a specific aim which seemed to be partially accomplished when he unearthed a scrap of mildewed carpet. This he examined patiently and lovingly, but evidently without some expected success.

"They've all hopped off," he said sadly and enigmatically. Then he nervously dropped the carpet. Regina had startled him out of a year's growth.

"Whoa!" she had yelled, in true rag-bottle-sack manner. "Whoa, I say! This will do."

She meant the neighbourhood. And, measured by their need, it was indeed perfect. The horse having whoa-ed, the children slid to the ground unmissed by the swarthy pirate who had conveyed them.

"Pepper-eggs! Geddup!" he roared and, thus roaring, passed harmlessly out of their lives.

In the squalid, evil-smelling, unpaved street

where the twins found themselves, they spent an hour of enjoyment so fierce as to resemble an orgy: not that they met a billy-goat, nor any urchin who would play with them, but dirt was both handy and plentiful, and that was the main thing.

Just why these children, clean of mind, delicate of habits, and trained to neatness, should have burst their sterilized bonds and gone hunting for grubbiness, is a question not to be lightly handled. Chronicled, their excesses would sound stupid and tame. They merely investigated refuse, poked into garbage-cans, climbed ash-piles, ate such articles as appeared passably edible, drank everything that looked like water, examined into the anatomy of one or two creatures that were very exceedingly dead, and kept a record upon their clothing of all that was smeary in the vicinity. Yet it was rapture.

Added to the delights of freedom, they had congenial companionship, for Rex had won the allegiance of a trusting yellow pup with the mange, and Regina had adopted a kitten. This kitten was sore-eyed and puny and too sick to stand, but Regina

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took it to her heart and to her arms and fondled it dearly.

Her long hair had become unbraided and fell softly about her face. She twined it around the



"Added to the delights of freedom, they had congenial companionship"

shivering kitten. Warm mother-love shone in her eyes and made them brooding and beautiful, ridding them of the noncommittal wary glitter which

usually masked their limpidness. Noting the change and charm, Rex fleetingly thought that if she weren't his sister she'd be pretty. He had never before thought her so, nor dreamed that she was affectionate.

With her new affection there was apprehension. Regina, pressing the abused little animal against her cheek, asked anxiously:

"Will I be able to keep her? Will Mama let me?"

Rex pondered. He grew anxious, too.

"I don't see why not," he said at length. "It is a God's creature and it's estheticker than the rubber-plant. Why not?"

He was speaking more bravely than he felt. He eyed his dog in grief.

But grief was short, and was completely drowned in a gutter of honest mud, commendably deep, a very river of gutters. They came upon its richness when their hour of freedom was almost up, and the sense of near relinquishment made them desperately indulgent.

"Now is as good a time as any to learn to swim,"

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announced Rex. He put his hat on the curb and carefully tucked the pup in it. Regina copied him faithfully, imbedding her kitten in hers. In their white chip dishes the animals looked like rolled roasts. Rex comfortably laid himself in the gutter, chest down, and issued directions.

"Don't mind your dress, Sister. It *couldn't* get blacker than it is. Lie down. On your stomach. That's it. Now move your arms — like me."

It was immense. In the middle of her swimming Regina was attacked by thought. She raised her head and gazed questioningly at her twin. They looked like two confiding mud-turtles.

"What," asked she, remembering the future planned by the Ministering Mothers' President for the waifs, "is a 'good Christian home'?"

"It's a — it's a — well, a house on a nice street."

"Is ours a good Christian home?" darkly.

"Oh, yes."

"Poor things," this very darkly.

"Who?"

"Those billy-goat children. To give up all this fun for a good Christian home. Poor things."

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They luxuriously went on swimming. An echo startled them.

"Poor things, poor things," said a third voice, overhead, and referring unmistakably to them-



"The twins discontinued swimming and looked up" selves. The Secretary and President of the Ministering Mothers were returning home.

The twins discontinued swimming and looked

up. Then they would gladly have discontinued living, had they known how. Yet — is it not odd that a situation of transcendent horror is mostly wordless? True, the President broke into sound, but it was fragmentary and banal.

“Lord a’ mercy! Who’d ‘a’ thought? What the world!” neither invite reply nor merit it. Mrs. Pet-tison turned very pale but maintained magnificent composure.

“Get your hats,” she said quietly and evenly. “Precede us home. Say nothing. Explanations will come later.”

This calm terrified the twins. Their jaws refused to stay shut. Their little mouths fell open. Yet some of her mother’s presence of mind cropped out in Regina, for she cleverly hid the kitten while putting on her hat. The pup stuck to Rex’s heels. The cavalcade moved.

The twins’ brains were reeling. The world whizzed about their ears. Whether or no the adults in the rear discussed the frenzied affair, they cared not. The universe buzzed. Rex was sick with fear — for his dog. Would it be offered a home? He

was now to know. At the Pettison door the puppy was driven off with sticks.

"Hydrophobia is my dread," observed the President, approvingly, as Mrs. Pettison drew a yelp from the fleeing cur.

"Oh, my dog, my dog," cried Rex, growing white. "I promised it dinner."

"Hush," said his mother witheringly; "when I hear from you it will be about something totally different."

Regina produced her kitten — from her hair — like a conjuror.

"Let me keep it," she begged shakingly. "Let me feed it and care for it and warm it and cure it and love it. I have nothing to love, and I want something so! Let me keep my kittie!" Its sore eyes caught Mrs. Pettison's entire attention.

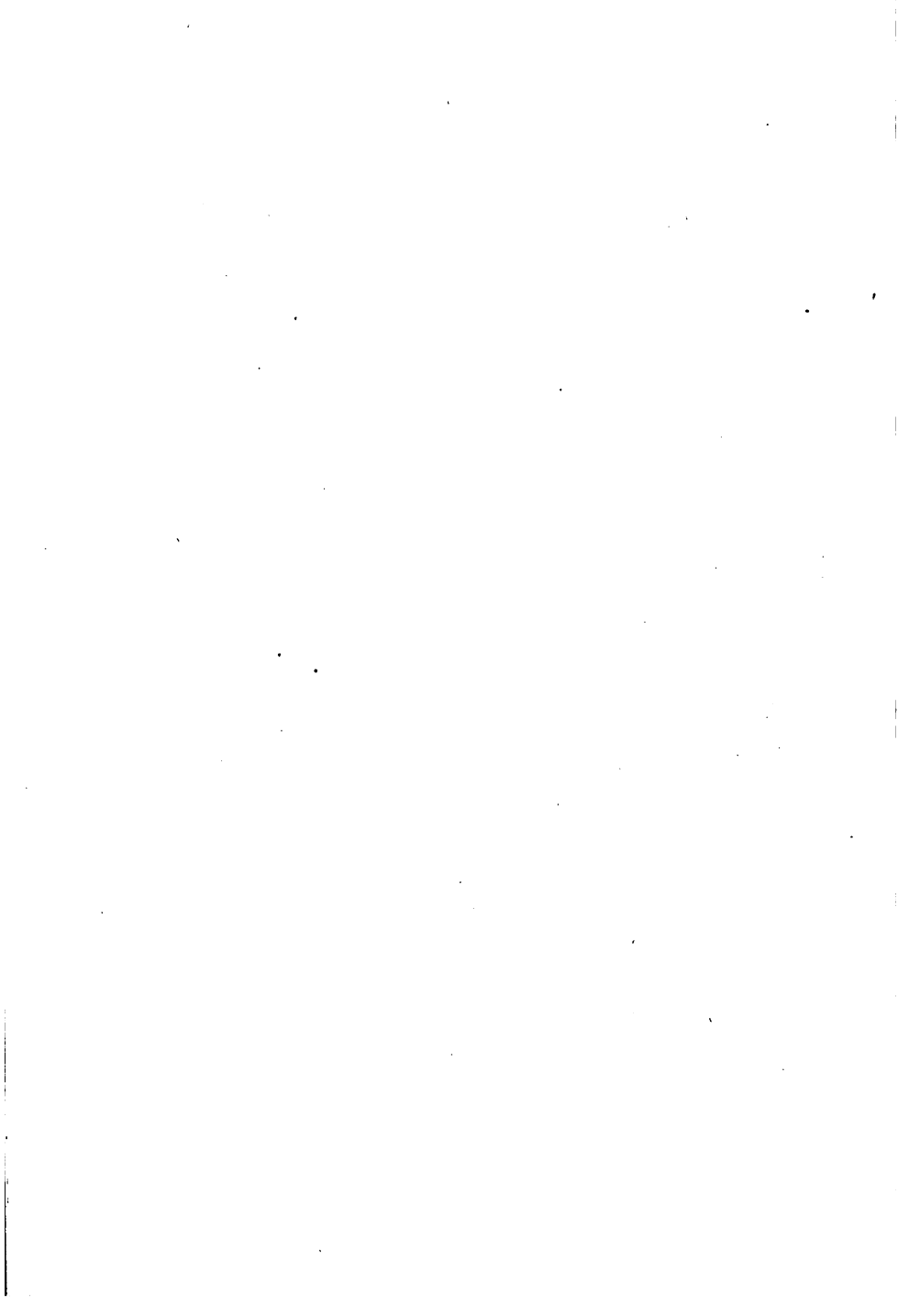
"My gracious, where is Catherine?" she called, taking the kitten by enclosing it in a sheet of newspaper. "This little beast may carry disease and infection into scores of homes, unless I do my painful duty. Catherine! Here, take this poor, wretched creature and humanely dispose of it."

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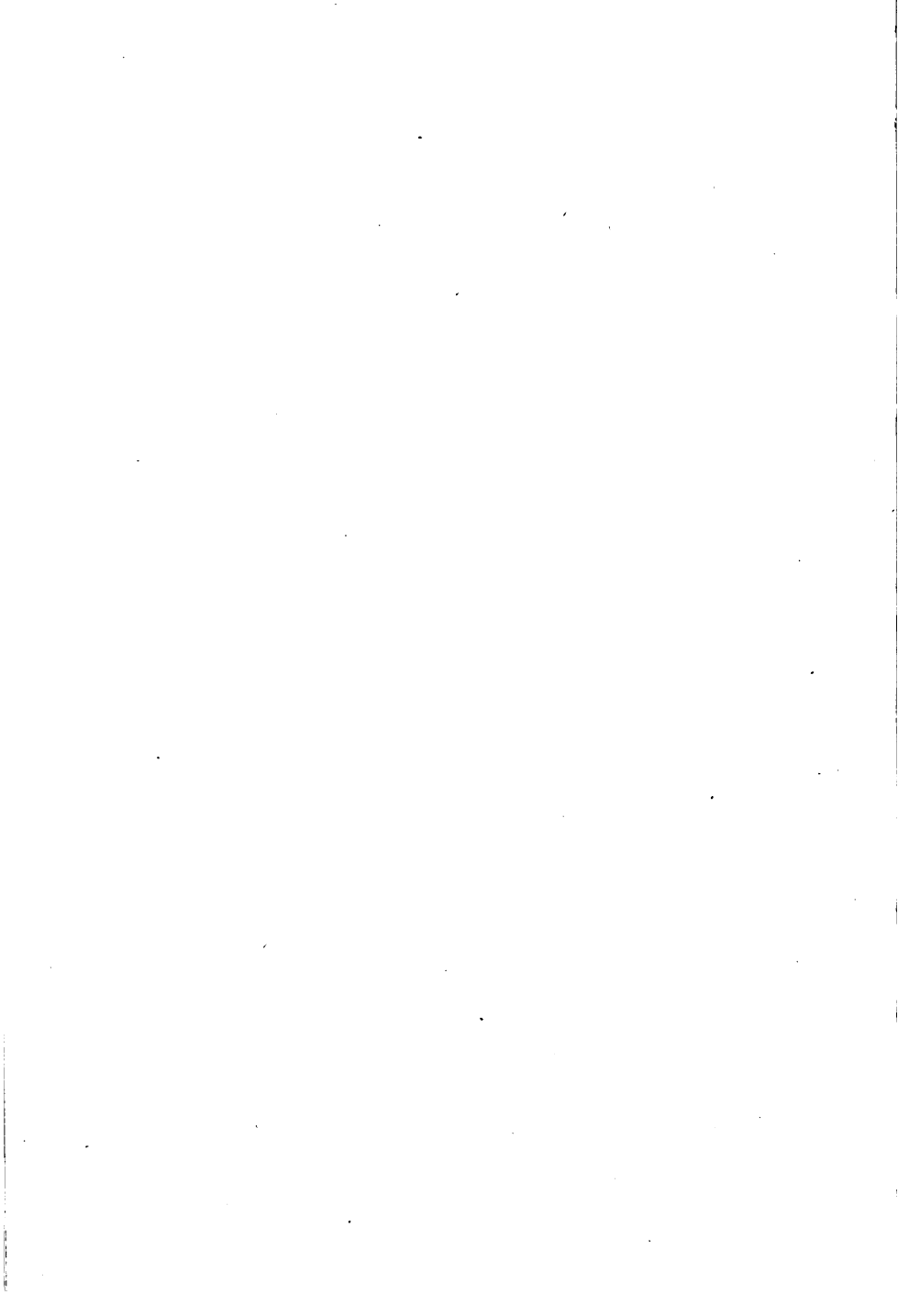
Regina's cry, had she fathomed "dispose," would have been a shriek.

To meet they knew not what, except that it would be sufficiently awful, the twins took each other's hands and crept into the house, sobbing.

Paradise once more closed round about them.



WHEN SILENCE WAS UNLOCKED



WHEN SILENCE WAS UNLOCKED

TO the two children incarcerated in the attic it seemed from the extreme joyousness of the sounds which floated up to them from the street that the outside world was having an afternoon far pleasanter than ordinary. This is not the first time that they had noted the phenomenon that your friends always seem able to have a more deliriously successful merry-making when you are not with them than when you are.

Down there, in the happy thoroughfare, horses *clopped* past in their most lightsome manner; dogs barked with that hysterical abandon which indicated rapturous discoveries, maybe kittens, maybe rats; the boys and girls emitted those peculiar squeals of laughter and agony which intimate sport of the properest character; Constantia's go-cart, recognizable because of the squeak of its one ungreased axle, creaked rhythmically up and down the block, giving evidence to the ears that Con-

stantia herself was taking her usual wobbly airing, pushed viciously by Catherine, the cook, who, when she removed her kitchen apron for the unwilling service, replaced it by a scowl of outraged dignity so thick that you could cut it with a knife and pass it around on plates; autos either *purred* or *burred* past, according to whether they were electric or gasoline; some stationary few hiccoughed sociably at the curbs awaiting passengers — in a word, every one on earth was enjoying open liberty except Rex and Regina.

Culprits, they had been relegated to the isolation of the attic on the presumption that its murkiness and gloom, coupled with its barren aloofness, would incline them, perforce, to meditate grievously upon their wrong-doing and awaken in them a lonely, repentant determination never, never so to err again.

That was certainly the presumption.

But the fact was that the twins had found such celestially congenial occupation, were having such a feast of entertainment, each after his and her particular bent, that neither could afford to waste precious minutes harping on dead and gone sin.

As usual, Rex had taken to literature, represented in this case by an old almanac which he had had the rare good fortune to find in a shoe-box. The almanac was satisfactorily rich in loathsome diseases, but its unique and paramount attraction was the full-page picture of a man artistically split wide open, his skin-flaps considerably held back by strings so that his charming vitals could be observed without obstruction. Each vital had moreover a spike-line running out to the margin where it was attached to the picture of a more or less mythical beast. The man himself, evidently the pleasantest sort of a fellow, was utterly undismayed by his predicament and stood buoyantly upright inviting scrutiny. Rex thought the picture not only perfect of its kind, but admirably adapted to the needs of a little boy under a cloud. He pored over it unsated. He *soaked* himself through and through with it.

Regina, never literary, had disposed herself comfortably on her stomach upon the floor, and, pin in hand, was methodically and thoroughly digging out a crack — her fifth. Four other long lines of miniature earthworks testified to her pre-

vious activity. Her tongue hung out a little and faithfully moved with every movement of the pin.

Once in the dim and wondrous long ago, Regina had pried from an attic crack one lone and inexplicable blue bead and she never quite despaired of finding another.

The occupation of thus searching was very soothing to Regina despite her certain knowledge of the fact that she was inexorably laying up new punishment for herself by reason of the dusty havoc she was making. It was so much an established family history, though, that Regina never employed one penitential leisure except by accumulating crimes for another that she had ceased from sheer atrophy of anguish to worry about it.

Had the children been shut up separately, they might have yearned to converse; but being thus irrevocably yoked together in the same cell, so to speak, they had no pronounced inclination to talk. For a truth, Regina *never* had. To her, speech was ever an unpleasant business, entailing always awful endeavour and oft leading swiftly to damnable mischances. She admired and practised taciturn-

ity. It appealed to her as the safest and sanest method of living at peace with the grown-up world, composed as it was mostly of parents and grandparents all foolishly particular about grammar and linguistic courtesies.

Rex was different. He was filled to the brim with language applicable to the occasion, whatever it might be. If jarred even in his sleep, a word came out of him, always the right one and generally of three syllables.

With Regina, the greater the menace of the occasion, the less was she able to express what was required of her.

This attic silence which was balm to her, afflicted him with a sense of wasted opportunity. His rhetoric ached to expand a little. He did what he could to mend the situation.

"Regina," he had ventured. His finger was upon the man's liver — not to lose the delightful place.

She made no slightest sign.

"Do you hear me, Sister?" he murmured meekly.

She flirted a pin-point's freight of dirt inordinately high in air to show she did.

"This is a beautiful book. Wouldn't you like me to read you some of the long words?" he pleaded.

"No!" She hurled the negation tersely at him, but never so much as moved an eyelash in his direction.

"Or the short ones?" he offered in gentle compromise.

"Ach!" scorned Regina, gutturally discountenancing him.

He sighed and went back to his liver — the man's.

It seemed as if hushed *years* sped by. Finally, forgetful of his long distant overture and its refusal, he again broke out.

"Regina!" he called unctuously. "Let me tell you about your valves and your p-u-l-m-o-n-a-r-
—"

"Hi!" shrieked Regina prohibitively. She elevated one leg like a flag-pole and punctuated her rejection by kicking the atmosphere towards him. There was no gainsaying the definiteness of both vocalism and pantomime. Her one need was silence.

WHEN SILENCE WAS UNLOCKED

Again Rex sighed and again he applied himself to anatomy. Again years sped by.

Out of this calm, Rex fired an irresistible shot.

"*What*," he cried amazedly, "*what* are we being punished for? I've forgotten. What did we do that was bad?"

So momentous was this question that Regina gave evidence of having condescended to consider it. Her pin poised inactively in mid air while she pondered heavily, still on her stomach. The problem defying that position, she turned herself over and sat up to it.

The twins gazed at each other in blank unremembrance. Then Regina's harassed little face magically cleared. The prettiest, softest smile momentarily wreathed her lips.

"'Pig,'" she said ineffably, and flopped back upon her stomach.

"'Pig,'" breathed Rex, ecstatically.

Pig was it. They had called Catherine a pig. There was triumph in *that*. No amount of punishment could do away with the happy fact that the epithet had been successfully bestowed.

THE PETTISON TWINS

For the sake of their personal safety, it was fortunate the twins succeeded as they did in recalling their iniquity, for on the heels of the achievement they heard their mother ascending the precarious attic stairs, coming to inquire into the state and extent of their repentance. Even with their facts well in hand, the twins knew that the interview would be none too placid an affair.

Impressively dumb, Mrs. Pettison seated herself forensically upon the top stair and sternly eyed the delinquents.

They had jumped apprehensively to their feet and now just wiggled and wiggled and wiggled. At this exhibition of inferior self-control, Mrs. Pettison added concentration to her stare. The children's very muscles melted under the anguish, and from their palsied fingers down fluttered the almanac and down tinkled the pin. Evidently these moves were not the ones expected of them, for Mrs. Pettison reared her already erect head and put an extra flash into her already searing glance. The unhappy, frantic little sinners dropped to their knees as if hamstrung, recovered the almanac and pin, put

both in acceptable places and then made another attempt to stand still. Unable as kittens to meet an eye of accusation, their long lashes swept desperately up and down.

"Well," said Mrs. Pettison at last, coldly tendering a slight indication of what she wanted, "have you nothing to say to me?"

Regina emphatically hadn't, so merely gasped — like an expiring gold-fish.

Rex heroically rose to the occasion.

"Mama," he said glibly and with the proper intonation of woe, "I am very sorry indeed that I spoke a rude word to good kind Catherine who does so much for us. It shall not occur again, I promise you I cross my h — cross my auricles and ventricles."

"What's that?" sternly interpolated his mother.

Rex reddened with misgivings. Had the wretched almanac deceived him? He would give it another show, and find out.

"My auricles and ventricles," he insisted, weakly. "The book says they are in me."

"To be sure. Very likely," she said, curtly and dismissively. She was used to Rex's exuberances

of speech and was not greatly concerned over them. What did worry her, and in no small measure, was Regina's absolute dearth of all words, even the most needful ones, and she always secretly dreaded an encounter with the obstinate-appearing reticence.

From the look of things, an encounter was on right now. Regina's sombre eyes glittered ominously, and when she was not gasping with fear, her lips were glued together.

"Well, Miss!" said Mrs. Pettison sharply.

The "miss" was the last stroke which utterly bereft Regina of brain.

"Well, Mama," was all that she could stammer.

"You have nothing to say?" this sarcastically.

Regina cheered up.

"No, Mama," she replied.

Cheer died a swift death.

"What!" erupted Mrs. Pettison.

"What?" echoed Regina.

"Am I permitted to presume that you are sorry?" asked Mrs. Pettison, growing in sarcasm.

Now "presume" was no daily acquaintance of

Regina's. It was a stylish sounding thing and seemed befitting to high days and holidays. Regina was not going to be idiot enough to commit herself to "presume" on such short order. She preferred to wait till she knew it a little better. So she buttoned up her mouth and warily shook her head.

"What!" again exploded from Mrs. Pettison. "Do you mean to say that you are *not* sorry?"

Did she? Perhaps she did. It sounded rational. Regina willingly let it go at that.

Mrs. Pettison proceeded to wither her with a glance — one of those comprehensive affairs beginning at the top-knot and ending at the toes. Reaching the toes, this particular one not unnaturally branched sideways and took in the appalling earthworks.

"W-w-who did that?" demanded Mrs. Pettison, fairly choking with displeasure.

Regina hopelessly prodded her own palpitating breast-bone with accusing forefinger.

"WHATever for?" continued Mrs. Pettison, still choking.

Under the impression that her work spoke sufficiently for itself, Regina made five separate sweeps of her arm to call attention to her industry in its entirety. The jaunty impudence of the gestures accorded so ill with the misery of Regina's face, that Mrs. Pettison was nonplussed.

But not for long. She was the monthly recipient of the *Home Messenger*, a domestic magazine with a mania for raising — chickens, asparagus, the church debt, mortgages, children, pin money, the nap on velvet, everything. Last month it had contained quite a gem of an article on "Children's Intelligence: How to Cultivate Memory and Expression."

In this, her hour of need, Mrs. Pettison promptly put its suggestions into practice.

"Regina, dear," she said, with uncanny sweetness, "put on your hat, walk around the block and then come back and tell me what you saw."

Regina's eyes all but goggled out of her head. And no wonder. That a walk around the block should come as a natural resultant from five evis-

cerated attic-cracks, was marvel enough to unsettle a reason even more solid than hers.

Not that Rex shared her astonishment. Far from it. He and the *Home Messenger* were warm friends. Was it not monthly given him that he might read its Children's Corner, and did he not skim through that balderdash as quickly as possible in order to feed his larger needs on Talks with Parents, and did he not know all about this walk-around-the-block business and its salutary influence upon the Memory and Expression? Of course he did. Shutting his eyes he could even see the article, page 57, wander frame-like on all four sides of a photograph of a sanitary knitted wash-rag.

The exercise wooed his ardent imagination.

"Mama, may I go too?" he begged.

"I suppose so," replied his mother none too enthusiastically, well knowing that the trip would fill *him* up with material for a three volume novel — to which she would have to listen.

"Oh, thank you," he effervesced. "Come on, Regina."

Dazed, she followed him. Out on the street, her

dumb dulness increased. So upset was she with the whole inconsequential affair, so blackly sure that worse was coming, that no clothes-horse could have trotted around that block more wooden or more unseeing. As for Rex, from head to foot he was one colossal, palpitating eye. Not a cobweb escaped him.

Returned to the house, they found their mother waiting for them in the nursery.

She was worse than waiting. She was smiling. There are times in the affairs of life when a smile is more than suffering flesh can stand. This was one of the times. And Mrs. Pettison's smile at the present moment was invitational to a horrible extent.

"And now," she said with vast expectancy, "little daughter may tell Mother what she saw."

Regina's honest little soul leaped to her lips — and barred them. Tell what *Mother* saw? Who but God could know that? This game was so unfair from the very start that Regina decided to stay out of it. Her eyes glittered; and no words came.

"Go on," commanded Mrs. Pettison sharply, while the smile vanished.

WHEN SILENCE WAS UNLOCKED

Regina turned her tragic glance on her brother. He threw himself at once into the breach.

"May I begin?" he asked.

"Very well."

Indeed it was wise from more points of view than one that Rex was allowed to speak first, for his accumulated knowledge was all but shoving his eyes from his head.

"In the sky, I saw clouds. The clouds looked like sheep. Then some of them turned to chickens," he commenced. He continued quite as fluently. Exhausting the sky, he discoursed on the houses. Dropping from the houses to the street, he enumerated all the people he had met, and explained their clothes. He ran out of breath before running out of material. It was a highly creditable recital, and really merited more enthusiasm than it got.

"Very good, indeed," said his mother indifferently. Not for *his* benefit was this circus gotten up.

Mrs. Pettison steeled her courage and said as casually as possible.

"Now, Regina."

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"Now, Mama," said Regina, obediently but hopelessly.

"Well!"

"Well?"

"It is your turn."

"Turn?"

"Speak!"

"Speak?"

"My good gracious, why do you parrot me?"

"Parrot?"

"Tell what you saw in the street!"

"What *I* saw — oh."

"You saw —?" prompted Mrs. Pettison, elaborately.

"You saw —"

"YOU. You. Not me at all!"

"I saw — I saw — I saw —"

"What?"

" — the street."

Regina considered this a masterly stroke. Her face which had turned white under the bewilderment and strain, cleared a trifle. She hoped that things would now blow over. They did not. They blew up.

WHEN SILENCE WAS UNLOCKED

"‘The street,’" scorned Mrs. Pettison. "That is no answer. I *insist* upon a fit reply. What did you see?"

"I saw —" Regina started the treadmill again.

"I saw —"

"Yes!"

"Nothing!" This came inspirationally.

"You *did*!"

"I saw —" resumed Regina in the voice of a sleep-walker.

"Finish!"

"I saw —"

"Continue!"

"— what Rex did."

"And what was that? Repeat it."

"I've forgot."

The situation had grown from an incident to a catastrophe. For a while it had borne the character of a psychological phenomenon. It now leaped suddenly into a private-family horror.

Rex, who had never taken his big, pitying eyes from his sister's face, now wrung his hands in helpless astonishment. How anyone could remain so

chary of language with whole dictionaries of words lying around loose, so to speak, quite passed his comprehension.

With Mrs. Pettison, anger turned now to fright. The frenzied fear came to her that Regina's mind might be as blank as her face. She *must* find out.

"Regina! Have you no ideas?" she cried excitedly.

"Ideas?" quavered Regina, catching the infection of excitement, and rapidly parting with her stoicism.

"Yes. Tell me what is going on in your mind! Please!"

"Mind?"

"Oh, I shall go mad if you echo me any more!"

"Echo?" This was said with raising resentment. An echo properly belonged to the side of a barn and in all decency ought to stay there. It had no business mixing up in a family row.

"How shall I reach her intelligence!" moaned Mrs. Pettison, almost giving up.

"Tell her to talk out of her own head," threw in Rex, sepulchrally helpful.

WHEN SILENCE WAS UNLOCKED

"Talk out of your own head!" commanded Mrs. Pettison wildly.

This seemed to touch some vital part. Regina crimsomed and trembled.

"Oh, don't ask me to do that!" she cried. "There's so much there! And it's all bad!"

"Out with it!" stormed the usually controlled mistress of the house.

"Don't make me," pleaded the victim, turning white again. "It's not about the street."

"I don't care what it is about. I insist upon hearing," exclaimed the inquisitor. Raising her small but capable hand in the air she brought it down upon a table with a tremendous whack and thundered the single word,

"Speak!"

With one anguished little scream, never daring to disobey, Regina spoke —

"All the time I'm thinking. Awful things. That's why I don't say them. Unless I'm made. Everybody thinks I'm silly because I don't say much; but I'd be a bigger silly if I did. 'Cause everything I say is rude. I don't know why. It just is. I don't

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make it rude. It makes itself. But I get punished. Being punished though isn't as bad as not being punished. Lots of the time I was thinking how lovely it was in the attic. When we are punished the most it is by being in the room with you, for you always keep telling us not to bite our nails and don't scowl and stop lolling and things like that. The attic was fun. The first thing I did when I got up there was to put my finger in my mouth and write wet poetry in the dust. I wrote.

Katy is a Pig.

Papa is a Pig.

Mama is a Pig.

Rex is a Pig.

Heaven is a Pig.

Not me is a Pig.

Then I felt very good. And I hunted for beads. And I was a nice girl all the time. But when you came up in the attic I knew we were going to be forgiven and I didn't want to be, because then we'd have to go downstairs and do things we didn't want to do. I knew I would have to say I was sorry — though I wasn't — but when I know I *have* to

say a thing the words won't come up, just as when I *have* to take a pill the pill won't go down, though I can swallow whole grapes, just as *easy* ! I know every bit as much as Rex does, but after he has said it I keep thinking of how silly it will sound for me to say the same thing, and I can't say it. And so everybody thinks that Rex is the smart one and that I am the dunce. I would hate Rex if I did not have to love him because he is my own dear little twin brother and God put us on a stork's neck, Rex tied on with blue ribbon and me tied on with pink, so Katy says, but I don't believe it and never have, but this is the first chance I've had to say so. I don't really want Rex to die, for he is nice to me, but if he did, then I would be the smartest. And when you told me to go in the street, I knew it was for something awful and I was afraid. Everytime I *want* to talk somebody says little girls mustn't and when I don't want to talk, somebody says I must. I know what you wanted me to talk for — about the street — you wanted, everytime I *seen* a thing to say I ought to have *saw* it. When I am thinking to myself, I always know when to *saw* a

thing and when to *seen* it, but when I'm talking to you, I get all mixed up. And I wasn't sure whether you wanted me to say what I saw or what you saw. I never know what you want. Never, never. Angela always knows what her mother wants, because Angela's mother smacks Angela's paddies — that's her hands — when Angela is bad, so of course, Angela knows. I wish I had a mother who would smack my paddies and then kiss them to make them well instead of sending me around the street to tell you what's there when you know what's there better than I do because you go out oftener. I wish we could pick out our own fathers and mothers, for then we'd pick out the kind that love us and we wouldn't have to cry at night under the bedclothes so's no one can hear us and scold us for it. And whole lot of the time when you were trying to make me say things, I was thinking about the hair on your face. I didn't ever know you had hair on your face till you put your cheek in the sun and then you had fuzz on the sun side and none on the other. And I kept wondering if your mama ever told you when you were a little girl to stop frown-

ing, and if she did, why you didn't; because you have two lines right now on your forehead, just as I have when you say 'don't scowl.' I wish lots and lots that I was a kitten, for kittens are the only things I can think of that don't have any fathers, and when Papa comes home to-night, you'll tell him all about me, and make me remember I'm a bad girl after I'd forgotten it. And who made me a bad girl, I'd like to know? Who made me talk? I could have kept still all my life. Who made me say bad words? You."

Not mutinous, not accusing, merely literal, Regina gazed darkly into her mother's varying face.

Exceeding stillness reigned in the room.

"Whee!" sighed Rex, at last. The sigh admitted that his prestige as a linguist had departed.

But the overwrought little orator was conscious only of fright. Realizing that she deserved some awful doom, she burst into a rush of tears.

Fortunately for her, the *Home Messenger* had long been contending that sin was a disease and should be treated medicinally as such.

Mrs. Pettison was swift to act. Running into the

hall, she called out instructions to Catherine, the pig.

"Some hot water, immediately," she directed. "Regina is hysterical and probably feverish. I must give her a footbath and some lemonade. Hurry. In the nursery."

Returning to the weeper, she took her in her arms — to count her pulse and take her temperature — asking anxiously.

"Does your head ache, Regina? Have you pains anywhere? Tell me. Answer."

Only if sobs are language, did Regina make reply.

But Mrs. Pettison forbore to insist. She was doing a little thinking herself.

**HOW CORDIAL RELATIONS
WERE STRAINED**

HOW CORDIAL RELATIONS WERE STRAINED

MISS Arthur lived opposite. Rex and Regina, came to know her very well. As a rule, the twins were not encouraged to make acquaintances — almost never with people opposite. People Opposite, as a class, were apt to move in and out in May and September and to have little boys and girls who not only caught mumps, measles, whooping-cough and chicken-pox, but gave freely of all that they had.

Mr. and Mrs. Pettison were the ones who objected to diseases; the twins did not. They fairly longed to catch something dreadful enough to merit a placard from the health department. Their preference was for a blue diphtheria card. They admired that colour, and the word itself had a substantial look. "But we are too sickeningly healthy ever to have a lick of fun," commented Rex, sadly.

He had picked up this sentence second hand. He *hoped* that the first part of it might be technical and respectable; but the word "lick" he knew to be a bad one. He used it with keen pleasure and with bated breath, for, caught using it, he would be exhorted, scolded and sent to bed supperless and by daylight. One is bound to enjoy a word of such consequence.

To lesson their chances of hearing bad words as well as to keep their systems from diseases, the twins were forbidden to be sociable with neighbours; but in Miss Arthur's case the ban was lifted because she was a primary school teacher; and the grown-up Pettisons thought that a teacher, like a good geyser, was everlastingly and instructively spouting.

Now, Rex and Regina liked Miss Arthur solely because she commonly was everything a teacher generally wasn't.

She was young and pretty and laughed in a rippling way at almost nothing; she played marbles with little boys; she jumped rope with little girls; and, before school, in the morning — very, very early —

sometimes her hair was plaited down her back; and if she made a joke that a little boy couldn't quite see into, she would take the end of her braid to tickle the corners of his mouth until he just *had* to giggle.

"Yet Lenny Smith told me you were the 'strictest dis-ci-pli-na-rian' in the school," said Rex, one Saturday morning as he and Regina and Miss Arthur sat huddled in an affectionate bunch upon the top step of the Arthur's front porch.

"Good Gracious, baby; where have you been keeping that big word?" asked Miss Arthur, her mouth solemn but her eyes very bright.

"In my head. Where the others are. Some of them bigger than that, too."

"Bet you don't know its meaning?"

This spontaneous profanity (for surely *bet* was a "swear word") gave Rex a shock, but he chivalrously accepted it and replied courteously:—

"Bet I do. I asked Lenny. He said it meant that you made your scholars 'wake snake and walk chalk.'"

Miss Arthur went off into a peal of laughter.

"And what does the meaning mean?" she asked.

"(Meaning mean)," murmured Rex, thriftily fishing up the phrase as it floated past him on the current of conversation. It was a new combination, which he might need some day in his business, so, before packing it away, he repeated it to anchor it in his memory. Then he replied to Miss Arthur's question: —

"I know what it means if you don't ask me to say it. It's inside me. But it's one of those things that won't come out — like a tune that you can hear in your head till you try to sing it; then it goes away."

"Oh, you dear little thing? how I wish you were in my class!"

"We're coming. Regina and I. But not yet, because we're still in the kindergarten."

"Graduate as soon as you can, won't you?"

"Nobody ever graduates from a kindergarten."

"Dear me! How do they escape?"

"Grow too big for the little red chairs. Then their mothers send them to the primary school."

CORDIAL RELATIONS STRAINED

"Oh. What sort of a fit are you?"

"For the chairs?"

"Yes."

"Too big. So's Regina. That's why we are coming into your class."

"But you'll have to go through the 'baby class' first, dearie. I teach little boys and girls after they have been promoted from that."

"We are advanced children," explained Rex, parroting his mother.

He gazed into the past until he recollected some exact words, which he brought forth unctuously:—

"— exceedingly advanced for our ages. (Age, I guess. Not ages, for Regina and I have only one age between us because we're twins.) Yes. Exceedingly advanced. In the kindergarten we sing — 'Two little cats and two little cats are four little cats you see, and two cats more are six little cats and six are two times three, and two little cats and two little cats are four little cats in view, and two cats more are six little cats and six are three times two.' But at home, we know the multiplication

table up to twelve times twelve, and if we have a pencil and lots of paper we can get up to thirteen times thirteen. Then, at the kindergarten, we say that the earth is round like a ball, but our geography at home says it is flat at the poles. In the kindergarten we spell 'cat' and 'boy' and 'mat' and queer little words like that, but at home we spell most everything we hear and see. Now — er, last night we studied 'p-h-a-r-y-n-g-i-t-i-s.' We learned it off a medicine bottle. We don't know how it sounds yet. We're waiting for somebody to say it. Then we'll know what we've got."

"Fatty degeneration of the brain. That's what you've got," stated Miss Arthur positively. "Wake up, Regina, girlie! Why don't you talk?"

"I don't have to. I'm having a nice time without. I've a loose tooth and I'm wiggling it with my tongue," explained Regina in the tone of one with mind sufficiently diverted.

Miss Arthur squeezed them tightly in her arms and cried with rapture: —

"Oh, you dear pair of originals! Hurry and grow

out of the little red chairs, for I awfully want you in my class!"

They squeezed her rapturously in return and then trotted home, warm all over with that nice creepy feeling which comes when somebody says she wants you awfully.

That somebody said as much to Mrs. Pettison when next the ladies met.

"And I assure you I am as anxious as they, that you should be their teacher," averred Mrs. Pettison graciously. "You know my little ones personally, and they know you, and reciprocal, intimate knowledge is necessary before a teacher can do what is right by her pupils."

"Yes, indeed," cooed Miss Arthur, impressively. She was extra cordial about it because she didn't quite see through it.

"My children are no worse than other children," continued Mrs. Pettison, "and no better —" She awaited contradiction, but Miss Arthur believed that contradictions were impolite and was silent.

"NO BETTER," repeated Mrs. Pettison, glaring proudly. "But they have their idiosyncrasies.

Idiosyncrasies are a manifestation of character and should be respected. Teachers as a rule ignore this fact and by so doing discourage naturalness. To treat a roomful of children as one child is absurd, and destructive to mental development."

"Utterly absurd — the flaw in the system," sighed Miss Arthur, looking pretty and sympathetic and as if she meant everything she ought to mean.

Mrs. Pettison was gratified to find that Miss Arthur coincided with her views, for Mrs. Pettison had no time herself to cultivate the personal idiosyncrasies of her own children and was naturally anxious that this important matter should be attended to at school. She parted from Miss Arthur with redoubled confidence in that young woman's fitness to teach.

Miss Arthur's dimples and lovely voice and big dark eyes were worth more than wisdom and pedagogics every day in the week.

The twins grew indefatigably and one morning presented themselves in Miss Arthur's school-room. The fact at once struck them that they were more glad to see her than she to see them. She

spoke to another teacher about its being a nuisance when children came in the middle of the year.

She seated them at desks and then questioned them tersely (and rather impertinently, they thought) about their vaccination marks, books, slates and ability to read. Then she apparently forgot all about them.

She didn't have her Saturday face, either. Her hair was on the top of her head and her eyes didn't dance and sparkle — and they saw *everything* ! In the short space of two minutes she had slammed one little boy *into* his seat for looking out of a window, jerked another little boy *out* of his seat for marking his desk, and had sent a little girl, howling piteously, into the dressing-room to wash her grimy hands. Yet, in spite of all these things, she was not "mad !"

Regina was goggle-eyed with fear.

"Don't worry, Sister," whispered Rex soothingly, from his seat across the aisle: "I guess it's only dis-ci-pli-na-rian-ing."

"Who's whispering ?" snapped Miss Arthur, half turning from the blackboard. Rex raised his hand.

"Twenty minutes after school," said she.

It was such an utterly irrelevant remark that Rex gave it no concern.

"Copy. Learn," said Miss Arthur, tapping the sentence she had just written. It was a quotation from Emerson:

"A gentleman makes no noise: a lady is serene."

In passing, it might be mentioned that the excitement of new surroundings caused Regina to miscopy thus: — A gentleman makes noise: a lady is sere." This she learned and carried with her into middle life.

Copying the gem took long, for even in the second year of school, writing is an act of torture, performed perspiringly and one letter at a time. For her part, Miss Arthur kept extraordinarily busy, flying down one aisle and skimming up another, leaving tears and smiles in her wake according to the reproof and praise she administered. Reaching her platform again, she rang a bell as a signal for all the cramped little fingers to release the pencils. "Give your strictest attention!"

CORDIAL RELATIONS STRAINED

Fifty pairs of pudgy hands clasped themselves upon their desks, fifty stiff little bodies leaned against the backs of seats, and one hundred confiding, expectant eyes were fixed upon the speaker. "Outside, in the principal's office are three School Directors. Three. They have come to this building ESPECIALLY to listen to your Form and Colour lesson."

Pausing to allow this important information to sink in, she had the satisfaction of seeing all the eyes grow wonderfully round. Then she continued.

"These gentlemen have heard how thoughtful you are, and how brightly you use your minds. Eugene Delaney, distribute the gifts and then go to the office to invite the gentlemen in."

The twins wondered at Miss Arthur's school-voice — it was so "choppy." They felt that if ever she should chop at them, individually, in that tone, they would die then and there. They wondered, too, about "Eugene Delaney" and the "gifts" — the first sounded aristocratic and the second smacked of Christmas. Both were disappointing. Eugene Delaney turned out to be just one of themselves.

He was pimply, also wall-eyed. Meek though he was by nature, his divergent eyes gave him a singularly untamable air. The "gifts" were only wooden things — cubes, cylinders and spheres. They weren't gifts, either, for they were taken back at the end of the lesson.

When each child was supplied with a set, and each desk was a marvel of neatness, the smirking, nervous, pop-eyed Eugene went for the audience. They filed gravely in and took seats upon Miss Arthur's platform. She began the lesson.

"Take this." She lifted her cube. Fifty pupils did the same.

"Examine it well. Use your eyes and your minds. Who is ready to tell what it is?"

The answer should have come in stereotyped form: "It is a cube, because it has eight corners, six flat faces and twelve straight edges."

Unfortunately, Rex thought that the lesson called for an imaginative "stunt," such as he and his kindergarten mates had been taught to delight in, so he jumped to his feet with the radiant announce-

ment, "It is a nice, square piece of Johnny-cake all hot from dear mother's oven!"

Not to be outdone, Regina jumped to *her* feet and squeaked, "It's a big, big lump of sugar for a giant to put in his coffee cup!"

"Oh, sit down! Both of you! Sit down!" begged Miss Arthur. Forty-eight eager little tongues were ready with the right reply, so the difficulty was quickly and creditably tided over.

The twins wisely held their tongues for the rest of the lesson and it went off very well. Not so the colour lesson.

Miss Arthur held up a square of red cardboard. She intended to make them see complementary colours.

"Look intently at this. Keep looking while I count twenty. Then close your eyes. Then tell what you see."

Of course the answer should have been, "I see a *green* square, Miss Arthur." But, alas for Rex! In the kindergarten to shut your eyes and tell what you see is an invitation to conjure up the wildest possible "dream." Rex was quite ready. When

"twenty" died away he was on his feet gabbling in his most inspired manner.

"I see a lovely, sunny field of wheat. There are cows in the field. The cows give us sweet, rich milk. I see a brook in the field. There is a mill beside the brook. The miller grinds the wheat into pure white flour, and Katy the cook makes it into bread for *dear* little baby!"

After one breathless moment of absolutely petrified silence the class broke into Homeric laughter — cruel, perhaps, but uncontrollable as the wind.

Stunned, Rex shrank back into his seat, years older in that one minute. The agony of it will never quite leave him. Times and times, after he is a man, he will wake suddenly in the night, suffocated with shame, to flush anew under the old, old insult.

The rest of the day was uneventful. A queer thing happened at the close, though. Hats and cloaks were given out, the bell tapped for dismissal, and Rex rose with the class to go home. Immediately he was pierced by outraged glances and scores of hands were raised in protest.

"He has to stay twenty minutes, Miss Arthur! He has to stay twenty minutes!"

"Take your seat, Rex."

Somebody obligingly jerked his jacket away from him and he flopped back. The others went without him. Miss Arthur corrected papers. So long was that twenty minutes that Rex would have gone insane had it not been for a fly which stuck affectionately to him. In wondering where that fly was going to light next, Rex saved his reason.

Sending him home, Miss Arthur was as sweet and pleasant with her "Good-night, Rex," as if she had not been a traitor to the fair past and a disgrace to the gentle name of woman.

The next morning the children were accompanied to school by their mother.

"Why, this is lovely of you, Mrs. Pettison! Good-morning," chirruped Miss Arthur.

"Good-morning," conceded Mrs. Pettison coldly. The temperature fell to freezing. "I did not expect to have to make a complaint so soon. Rex came home very late last night. Only upon being questioned — for he is no tale-bearer — he ex-

plained that you had kept him in. I do not wish the rules of the school set aside for *my* children. They are no better and no worse than others. No worse. And they are sensitive. Keeping him in may seem a trifle to you, but trifles count, and I think it would have been politic in you had you overlooked his small transgression, and not stamped his first day in school with sadness."

"Now you put it that way, I think so too," said Miss Arthur honestly. "Yet there is something to be said on the other side. The world is a stern place where wrong doing is followed by punishment. The school is a little world, and we who labour in it are striving always to fit our charges for the bigger world outside. A child is the most fair-minded of creatures, and never harbours resentment against one who punishes impartially and temperately."

Mrs. Pettison was silenced. The speech might have been her own, word for word. Her guns were spiked. Miss Arthur in saying the right thing had said the wrong thing, and Mrs. Pettison was not able to forgive it. To start out on a crushing expedition and then to go home crushed is fearful.

CORDIAL RELATIONS STRAINED

For the victims of democratic education, Tuesday was not altogether a bad day. They were placed in the first desk row in the room, which was virtually a promotion, for that row was known as "A" row, and contained only the "smartest" pupils.

"Are we put here because we are fatty degenerates?" asked Rex in a flattered voice. Miss Arthur looked puzzled and frowned him down. Children would be ashamed to forget as quickly as grown folks.

In these seats of the mighty, Regina came to grief. She, with the others in her row, was asked to write the answer to the time-honoured question about who discovered America. Miss Arthur did not doubt her prize row's knowledge of Christopher Columbus, but she *did* want to find out whether or not they knew how to spell the gentleman's name.

Regina had read her Child's History, if not wisely then certainly too well, and in answer she put down "the Norsemen."

Pimply Eugene, who got the paper to correct, thought it a mighty poor way of spelling Christopher Columbus, and most properly marked it zero.

THE PETTISON TWINS

Having no choice whatever between zero and the Norsemen, Regina took her marking affably; but when her seat was changed and she was set down the very last one of the fatty degenerates, a sense of degradation grew upon her and she wailed loudly and long.

Wednesday morning Mrs. Pettison again accompanied her progeny to school. The formality of greetings was soon over. Then, "I must definitely request, Miss Arthur, that Regina be given back her seat. Instead of punishment she deserves praise. Her historical knowledge is far in advance of the rest of your class."

Miss Arthur looked dismayed and her pretty lips curved questioningly. So far all was a mystery to her. By getting Regina and Eugene cheek by jowl together, she finally unearthed the whole affair. Eugene's eyes were several inches further out of plumb by the time she got through with him, but finally he was absolved as innocent.

"And you may keep the low seat for a while, Regina," explained Miss Arthur sweetly, "for you will enjoy knowing that you are really in advance

of the class in history, and it will be a pleasure for you to work your way up again."

Regina showed her enjoyment and pleasure by taking the disgraceful seat in a gust of heartbroken howls, and Mrs. Pettison left with the icy remark:—

"I started to write a note to you upon this matter last night, but thought that a personal interview might serve my little girl and myself better. I see that I was mistaken. Good-morning."

This note, though unsent, yet bore frightful fruit. While writing it Mrs. Pettison had blurred a letter and then had corrected her error by drawing a line through the offending character and writing it again on top of itself. Rex had noted the phenomenon, had inquired into it, and had had it explained to him.

Rex believed in applying his knowledge, therefore, to-day, when he wrote his spelling lesson, he ornamented each word with a correction, unaware that it was a rule of the school that any word palpably misspelled in the first place and then changed should be marked zero, the inference being that

the right spelling had been unlawfully cribbed from someone else. Rex's feelings when he received back his spelling paper may be imagined. Twenty zero marks, where he had expected "perfect" and a pat on the head!

Thursday morning, when Miss Arthur had called the roll and was preparing to set her charges to copying the usual matutinal gem from the blackboard, Mrs. Pettison flung open the door and swept majestically to the platform.

The children scented battle and were charmed. They clasped their hands and leaned back in their seats, their eyes so popping forward that they appeared to be on movable stalks, like a crab's.

"For some inexplicable reason, my little ones are being singled out for persecution!" In these irate words Mrs. Pettison fired the first rock.

"Persecution?" demanded Miss Arthur hotly, flinging *her* rock.

A squirm of delight writhed through the class; the fight was on.

"And as for myself, I very much resent being forced into the position of a fault-finder," continu-

ed Mrs. Pettison, "but this matter of the spelling paper is too important to be passed over in silence. My poor little boy —"

"Oh, it's the spelling paper, is it? I am sorry Rex was worried, but far sorer that you should consider an experience of no very great significance a 'persecution'!"

"Pardon me. In my estimation spelling *is* important!"

"Children come to school to learn more things than spelling. They have to learn that they are governed by laws. They have to learn to take consequences. Rex received neither credit nor discredit for his spelling. His class standing was not affected —"

"These things *may* be, Miss Arthur —"

"These things *are*!"

"But I defy you to use them adequately to defend your extraordinary system of marking papers!"

"Let me try. Across the aisle from Rex is a wretchedly poor speller. Suppose he were dishonest enough some day to change all his misspelled words

in accordance with what he saw on your little boy's paper — would you have me mark both children excellent?"

"Your illustration is wide of the circumstance — wide! If you cannot see as much, it is useless for me to argue longer!" With this Mrs. Pettison swept through the door, and a hundred movable stalks, with eyes on the ends, followed her admiringly.

The twins had mixed sensations. Their mother had "talked back" to the teacher, which certainly was a triumph; but, then, the teacher had spoken "choppily" to their parent. Honours were divided.

Feeling disgusted with the whole Pettison tribe, Miss Arthur that day was charitable enough to be more than ordinarily pleasant to the twins. This Christian tactic had the disastrous effect of inclining Rex to be communicative.

The tragedy occurred late in the afternoon, in the "literature" hour: — for, know, oh ye unenlightened, that the babies have literature nowadays, and even science. Miss Arthur had read them Longfellow's charming poem, "The Children's Hour," and she copied upon the board one verse

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for them to study and then reproduce in their own words. The verse was: —

“I have you fast in my fortress,
And will not let you depart,
But put you down in the dungeon,
In the round-tower of my heart.”

She touched upon Feudalism, explained “fortress,” “dungeon” and “round-tower” so graphically that the class was agog with interest, she hinted at the true meaning of the lines, and then gave a few minutes of silent thought, out of which any child could speak when he or she felt capable of turning the verse to prose.

A lovely calm crept over the room. Presently Rex raised his hand, his soft eyes glowing soulfully. Miss Arthur nodded her head in encouragement and Rex spoke: —

“I have a stomach-ache, Miss Arthur.” He looked at her hopefully.

In the kindergarten whenever a child suffered from cramps or ennui, he communicated the fact of his malaise to Miss Millie, and Miss Millie had the others sing a “Doctor Song” in which the suf-

ferer's pulse was counted and his tongue examined, with the result that his health was better when the song was over.

Miss Arthur was a poor hand at doctoring. She and Rex looked at each other for fully a minute, then she said, and not sweetly, "I'm sorry, of course, but take your seat, please!"

And this was the best the public school could afford in the case of illness! Rex was scandalized. He sat down and began to ponder upon what could possibly have caused the discomfort in the region of his belt.

So did Regina. Perhaps he had microbes. Where *could* brother have accumulated microbes?

Neither of them noticed that Miss Arthur had gone over her little historical talk in order to put her class again in tune for the poetry. Neither did they hear her again invite them to voice the music of their souls into their own simple speech. It was by unfortunate coincidence alone that Regina raised her hand in apparent response to the invitation.

Miss Arthur had no misgivings. She credited

Regina with a desire to redeem her brother's lapse, so she said gently :

“ You may speak, Regina.”

“ Do you think the water in the dressing-room is filtered, or boiled ? ”

Here Miss Arthur's tension snapped; she turned upon the astonished twins in a frame of mind for which “ mad ” is the only expression.

“ Sit down instantly, Miss! Keep silent for the remainder of the afternoon! Your brother also! You both of you interrupt and annoy us! If either of you says another word I shall punish you!”

The worst had at last befallen; they had been personally attacked. The tone of voice was beyond “ choppy.” it was wake-snake-and-walk-chalky.

Rex grew white. He bit his quivering lip to keep from unmanly tears. Regina put her head down upon her desk and wept convulsively.

Friday, Mrs. Pettison took her children out of school. For some occult reason, she considered this a complete retaliation for Miss Arthur's tyranny.

Force of habit is strangely strong. Saturday

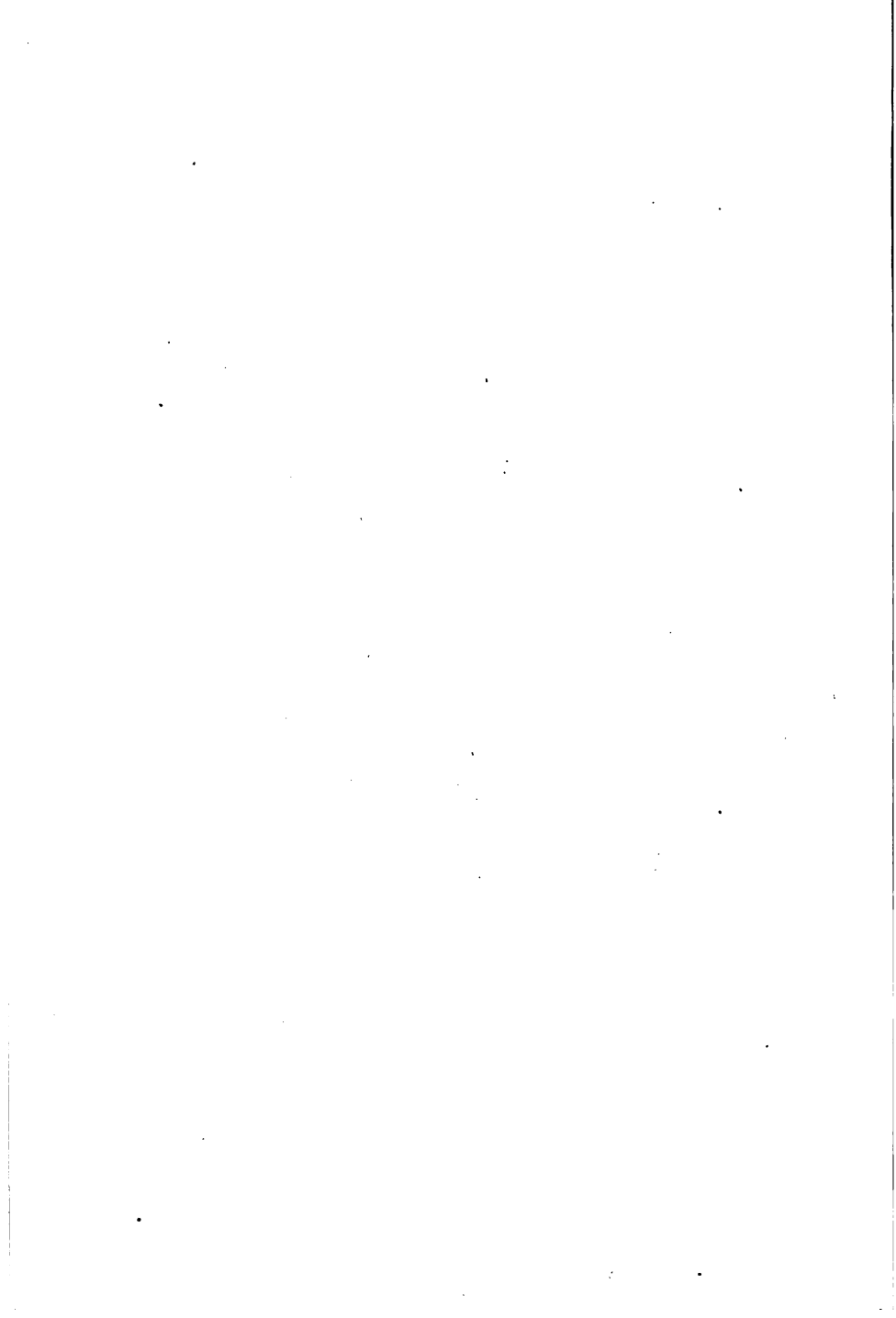
morning, the twins affectionately joined hands and started on a trot towards Miss Arthur's house. But before they reached it they paused. They looked irresolutely at the fair sky. Then they looked blazingly into each other's eyes. Regina broke out into these awful swear words: —

“Nasty. Mean. Old. Thing. Don't you think we got enough of her?”

Rex turned his sister homeward.

“We got a great deal too much,” he said.

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THE twins, furtive-eyed, distinctly nervous, looking for trouble but hoping to miss it, stood primly "at attention" before their mother and politely awaited a disclosure she had promised them.

"You are now old enough," said Mrs. Pettison, speaking as largely and generously as the dispenser of great gifts, "to enjoy a few pleasures of a social order, like other children. It is not good to grow up in utter ignorance of certain courteous requirements which will be expected of you when you are older."

She paused and swept her offspring with a pregnant look, inviting comment. Mrs. Pettison's invitations were like those of royalty — before one could decline them with convincing propriety, one had to die. Therefore —

"No, Mama," ventured Rex diplomatically upholding the ethics of her remark.

And —

"Yes'm," said Regina, genially, encouraging its promised pleasure.

"It has occurred to me that possibly you have not experienced some necessary enjoyments; that it might be a good plan for me to begin to initiate you two, even thus early, in your little duties as host and hostess."

Another awful pause; another frantic search by the twins for suitable filling, then —

"Yes, Mama," gulped Rex, heroically welcoming the duties.

"No'm," agreed Regina — very gloomily — in regard to the serious matter of her lack of enjoyments.

"Consequently —" here Mrs. Pettison threw into her tone a climatic thrill which would have been a music cue in a drama, "*consequently*, I have decided to let you give your young friends a little party!"

The twins rose radiantly to the occasion. Their small faces lost their usual and unchildish look of wary caution — born of the danger always pain-

fully imminent if they should fail ever so slightly in correctness of speech or deportment — and lit up with honest delight. A party! This was something like!

Mrs. Pettison beamed her approval of the warmth she had awakened, and with intent to increase it, said beneficently:

“And I have prepared a form of invitation which I am going to permit you to copy, yourselves, in your very neatest handwriting. To-day. Now.”

Regina's face blackened tragically. Her interest in the affair was temporarily killed. Writing meant ink. And ink meant ruin.

“Everything turns out to be lessons,” she muttered, in a hopeless aside to her brother, as Mrs. Pettison arose, beckoned them to follow, and swept over to the desk. Upon it were arranged some blank cards on two large sheets of white paper — these last for the protection of the baize.

But Rex, tip-toeing ecstatically forward, was truly charmed. Experience in all its forms was meat and drink to his scholarly soul. He climbed eagerly into his chair, caressed a pen, and loving-

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ly fondled his half of the neck of the ink-bottle. Regina blankly imitated him. Her frame of mind fell short even of resignation. Solely as an artist's pigment did Regina ever desire to trifle with ink, for the fluid had staying properties: as a medium for polite correspondence she very properly feared it.

Rex was really gurgling with glee.

"This is what we are to copy, isn't it?" he asked, in the rapturous intonation of a priest at beloved rites. He pointed to a card which proclaimed —

Miss Regina Pettison

Master Rex Pettison

at home

Saturday from three to five.

"That is it," affirmed his mother, also seating herself. "I shall address the envelopes. WHY do you not begin?" This to the unhappy Regina who was staring at the invitation with an air of rampant consternation.

Regina's eyes merely dilated wider from inward woe.

"WHAT is the matter?" exploded Mrs.

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Pettison, not always sympathetic over her daughter's frequent fits of mal-comprehension.

"Where are we before three?" queried Regina, aghast.

"Before three?" echoed Mrs. Pettison.

"And after five?"

Had her problematic whereabouts been the penitentiary, Regina could not have exhibited a more ghastly concern.

"*Write!*" said her mother with an exasperation which brooked no trifling.

So, temporarily gulping down the uncertain future, Regina swooped upon a pen, stabbed it deep in ink, and plunged recklessly into the black danger laid out for her.

"And what is the matter with YOU?" demanded Mrs. Pettison of her apparently petrified son.

Rex squirmed gently, lifted to his mother's face, eyes filled with scholarly reflection, and asked :

"Why does Regina grow into a Miss, all at once, while I have to be a Master before I get to be a Mister?"

"A matter of convention, unnecessary to explain to you at present; write!"

"Did the Knights Templars do it or the Daughters of the Revolution?" persisted Rex, meekly — those being the only two convening bodies of which he had yet heard.

There were times when Mrs. Pettison could not be sure whether Rex's remarks were emanations from the heights of wisdom or the depths of idiocy — and this was one of them. She waved him silently towards the ink-bottle.

Obedient but unappeased, Rex started in to copy, and he showed the trend of his preoccupation by writing two mister-cards for every master-card. Regina, too, wrought many a failure for each success. Her writing had a pig-headed tendency to run uphill, and, struggling with this perversity, she was apt to lose sight of the confines of the card and inscribe invitational terminals upon the white desk-pad, to the end that several of her laboured achievements made the incomplete statement that Miss Regina Petti and Master Rex Petti would be at home from three to f. Altogether, the twins used

up a euchre deck in the preparation of their half-dozen invitations.

"What a lot of them we have to write to get a few," said Rex rather admiringly as he contributed another mister-card to the refuse heap. Quite declining to share his admiration, his mother sternly awaited such invitations as were fit to send through the mails. These she would immediately corral and lick safely into envelopes.

"This is for Paul," she remarked informingly, addressing one.

"Paul won't need one; he'll come anyhow," murmured Rex, not in criticism nor in remonstrance, but in mere statement of fact. There was therefore no reply.

"And this is for Hugh," continued Mrs. Pettison.

Here Rex spoke up decisively.

"None for Hugh," he announced, "I don't like Hugh."

"In social observances of this kind," reproved his mother coldly, "we must disregard our individual preferences and be courteous to all alike."

"Oh," said Rex humbly, glimpsing her general meaning.

Concerning her use of big words, there was purposeful method in Mrs. Pettison's madness. She held that only by daily familiarity with dignified expressions could children be brought to use them naturally. Her talks were fearfully rhetorical as a consequence.

After dwelling a while upon the ponderous truth just doled out to him, Rex cheered immensely and remarked,

"Then I'm going to send an invitation to Jakey."

"And who may Jakey be?"

"He's the ash-man's little boy; he can stand on his head, and swear, and do lots of funny things."

She gazed at him so severely that Rex knew her mind before she spoke.

"My former remark had no reference whatever to companions of objectionable character."

"Oh," murmured Rex again. Truly the ways of society were hard.

Silent, with the apathy of a convict, Regina slaved on until the end. Not for her was there any

charm in frothy and frivolous conversation such as Rex dared juggle with. To get through without ink-ing herself from stem to stern was Regina's one ambition, and to safeguard that consummation she refrained from wasting her tongue on talk — she needed it to hang out of her mouth and wiggle with each wiggle of the pen.

When the children's labour were over, and the cards were removed for mailing by Mrs. Pettison, Regina lowered herself and her exhaustion to the floor thence to stare darkly at the ceiling and question the future — she mistrusted this function from the start. Rex, also sprawling somewhat, lopped over the arm of his chair to dwell pleasantly upon the new words he had just acquired.

These apparently innocent relaxations met with small favour from Mrs. Pettison when she came bustling back.

"Tt! Tt! Tt!" she observed with the cluck of disapprobation peculiar to mothers and abhorred of children. "Stop lolling. A little boy and girl who are going to give a party ought to be more careful of their deportment."

The twins scuffled to their feet and tried to pretend to do something. Regina primly pulled up a smooth stocking and Rex blew an immaculate nose. They hung on to garter and handkerchief till they could think of a next move. Even now they were far from safe, for —

“Regina, a lady never attends to details of her toilet in public; nor, Rex, does a gentleman put his handkerchief to practical use. I should be extremely mortified were you to do such things at your party. If you keep on showing yourselves unworthy of the pleasure I have planned for you I shall certainly have to recall the invitations.”

Rex obediently endeavoured to stop breathing, but Regina calmly desperate, asked,

“What *can* we do? Right now.”

“You MAY”—and the corrective emphasis was so forcible that Regina winced and shut her eyes — “go to the library, find ‘Little Points for Little People,’ turn to the chapter of ‘Don’ts,’ and read it to refresh your memories.”

Only too glad to escape, the pair leaked quietly out of the room and then fled to the library.

"Do you know what I think?" asked Regina, hurling herself into a chair.

"No," said Rex promptly and wisely. It were safer to guess at the workings of the mind of the Dowager Empress of China than to attempt to predict Regina. He had found the "Don'ts" in "Little Points" and was chivalrously presenting the page to her. Without so much as honouring it with a glance, she slapped the book dexterously afar and said:

"I think it's a mean shame that just after we've got through being worried to death with Santa Claus, we have to have this Party Thing over us."

Rex nodded a thoughtful assent. He knew exactly what she meant. Santa Claus had never been allowed to exist for them in his most delightful guise. He had been mercilessly explained away as "the Spirit of Christmas giving," but even in that diluted condition he had been wielded over them as a veritable rod in pickle to keep them from straying from the proper paths. With what sickening regularity they had heard it! — "If you persist in

doing thus and so, Santa Claus will certainly pass you by this Christmas."

If the twins ever cordially hated any one for a sneak, and a coward, a nagger and a nuisance, that one was holy Saint Nick. They had just weathered through the season of his most pernicious activity and now — as Regina pointed out — here was the party to keep them lashed into line.

Consolation being out of the question, Rex groped for "Don'ts," found them, and conscientiously perused them. Even Regina succumbed to them. Why rebel at so small a thing as "Don'ts"? Both children knew that this was a mere beginning to a vast deal of training sure to be forced upon them before the day of their first social function.

That day approached with awful swiftness. Prior to its arrival, the Pettison household, usually a calm one, was a-seethe with soapsuds. Getting ready for a party evidently entailed an inordinate amount of scrubbing. Wasteful scrubbing, too, because by no possible chance could the expected guests have had the time to pry into all the corners made clean on their account, nor would they have

been allowed to if they had. But the scrubbing of the house faded into insignificance when it came time for the twins themselves to be made clean. They had, of course, expected ablutions of a more or less painful nature, on the order of their Sunday wash, but this transcended even that. Washed is not the word; they were *gougéd* clean. They had no idea their heads were so full of orifices until the sponge got into them.

But the suffering resulted well. Even the twins themselves admitted it. They certainly looked very sweet and dainty in their completed finery. Then, like victims to a sacrificial altar, they were escorted to the flower-decked parlour and given a final résumé of what the world expected from them.

"Preparedness is the secret of social success," said Mrs. Pettison, really pretty in silk and lace. "You, Rex, are to stand here and are to greet each comer pleasantly, and you, Regina, are to ask each little girl upstairs to remove her wraps."

"What's those?" asked Regina in a panic.

"Those ARE outdoor garments."

His sister still looking anguished, Rex mumbled kindly.

“(Hats and coats.)”

“Ah,” breathed Regina, much relieved that it was no worse.

“And,” continued Mrs. Pettison, speaking with special earnestness, “since all games of a kissing or romping nature are shockingly unseemly, if not actually debasing, I have guarded against their occurrence by making ready a programme of entertainment that I wish you two to carry through.”

Shakspeare’s ghost gloomed from each ashen little face in the unspoken query — “What new sorrow craves admission at my hand that yet I know not of?”

Mrs. Pettison produced a sheet of paper and pressed it into Rex’s reluctant grasp.

“Here are some simple conundrums,” she said, “for you to ask your little guests. They are mirth provoking, and the pleasure attendant upon a correct guess will prove reward enough. To offer prizes or to expect them is to insult the hospitality of the home. But, before conundrums, Regina, after the

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children feel at ease, I desire you to ask each to recite a little poem or to sing. That will make an hour slip away very pleasantly. I intend to leave you two pretty much to yourselves for the reason that since Catherine must stay upstairs to look after the baby, I shall be obliged to be a great deal in the pantry attending to the refreshments. However, I will make a point of coming in and out to see how things are progressing."

She rustled away. The twins frowned steadily at each other. But they had no time for confidences for they heard a light step pattering up the front porch, followed by a vehement ring. Doretta was arriving.

Doretta was a stout little girl with an extremely sanguine disposition and slightly prominent teeth. She laughed very easily and she cried very easily, and when she cried she got very wet, but she dried very soon. All her colouring was good and pronounced. Her nature was less subtle than exuberant. Living only across the street, she had run over bareheaded and uncloaked. She started to dart gaily into the parlour. Her face was a-beam. Regina soon stopped *that*.

"Where's your wraps?" she demanded sharply.

"Wraps?" faltered Doretta, much taken a-back.

"Wraps," insisted Regina, losing none of her sternness.

"I don't know. I guess I didn't bring any," was Doretta's crestfallen confession.

"Well, I think it wasn't very nice of you to come to my party without wraps," said Regina. Then briefly —

"Sit down." Having been intrusted with this wrap-business, she felt aggrieved to be defrauded of her rights at the very start, and her temper showed it.

Subdued by the shock to her nervous system, Doretta entered the parlour in chastened spirits and climbed quietly into a chair.

Rex, too, was having trouble. Paul had arrived. Paul, being Rex's particular friend, had been arriving almost daily for a year and more, but never before in this horrible fashion — at the front door, and in a lace collar. Neither boy had a word to say, each too deeply resenting his friend's fine clothes. They stood hostilely gleaming at each other like two game roosters.

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The appearance of Angela affected a necessary diversion. It were impossible to view her unmoved. A born coquette, she was alluring from the top of her curly head to the tip of her slippers. The sight of her never failed to unlock Rex's heart. Now, in a rush of embarrassed tenderness, he bestowed upon her some fragments of the greeting he had intended for all.

"Angela," he quavered emotionally, "it was good of you to come to make me glad."

Midway, in her birdlike flight upstairs, Angela turned to dart him a look of pretty surprise. It then faded to unconcern, and she nonchalantly skimmed upward out of sight without bothering herself to speak a word. It was entirely for the furtherance of her own glad feeling, not his, that Angela had come. She really could not believe him idiot enough not to know it.

Two or three now appeared in a bunch and the social horizon grew dazzling. Hugh and Cecil were brothers. But it was hard to admit. Hugh, not overly loved by his kind, was a favourite with parents. So blue his eyes, so yellow his hair, innocence seem-

ed enthroned upon his countenance. Domestic animals knew better and when Hugh appeared in a home cats fled upstairs, dogs went unostentatiously into retreat, and parrots grew wan and thoughtful. Cecil, on the contrary, was an all-around good fellow; but because he was always hungry and because whatever he touched he broke, parents welcomed him with considerable reserve. He thought as little of them as they of him; but at a pinch he knew his duty by them. As now — he had the misfortune to enter the parlour by one door as Mrs. Pettison entered it by another. Seeing no escape from the horrible amenities of custom, he shook hands with her. Ay, and spoke.

“How do you do, Mrs. Pettison?” he asked, much anguished. “I’ve had a lovely time, I thank you.”

Perceiving that he had mixed up his politenesses, getting the hind one before, he ducked his wretched head and blushed. He might have been blushing still had he not burst into a peal of undefiled mirth, having had the rare good fortune to look up in time to see Paul trip on a rug and bring down a bouquet.

There is no salve for having made a fool of one's self, except seeing another do worse — and in one's own line, too. Mrs. Pettison removed the mess.

Upon the arrival of Elsie, the whole company was assembled. Elsie was an extremely tiny little girl in the very briefest of garments, and even then — Elsie had bones so like macaroni — there was lots of slack about them. To lift her suddenly was to challenge her to drop right out of her clothes, like the pit of a cooked prune. She had no assertion. Her one sole asset was a smile; not a smile that came and went, but a steady affair. A face on a pumpkin with a candle inside never boasted a smile more constant and inconsequential. To Elsie, all life was a coy joke deserving from her bounty this changeless tribute. Outside of her own home, no human being had ever seen Elsie unbutton her mouth or heard her utter a word. Yet she was a social creature, very gregarious, and attending all the functions of her set. Sunday, curled up on a bench in the Sunday-school, she smiled through its unexciting theology: week-days, she leaned back in a kindergarten chair like a cheerful paralytic

and smiled through its considerate menu of entertainment — but what Elsie thought of church or state or the private rights of the individual remained forever a sealed mystery.

Elsie and Regina got on very well. The one with her demure smile, and the other with her alert frown formed a combination equal to almost any emergency. But this society set-out taxed them both to their limit.

The company hitched itself into chairs and awaited developments. There was no conversation, for who can converse in a parlour? To talk really well, a person needs to be impaled on a fence, or swinging under a gate, or straddling a post.

A few furtive grins circulated painfully, and every once in a while the young people wriggled convulsively as if the chair held a hot spot and they then had come upon it. The strain told rapidly on Cecil.

"Where's the party?" he demanded crisply. He looked around for it as though it were some beast which haply were tethered to a chair leg.

"It's coming," Rex murmured wretchedly.

Knowing that the front end of the unhappy affair belonged to Regina, Rex erased it from his consciousness and head in hand he studiously applied himself to the private reading of his conundrums and to the memorizing of their attached answers — for it would be a frightful thing not to recognize the right answer were it to be tendered.

Quite aware of her responsibility, and hating it, Regina looked daggers at her guests. She scored up against them the whole general unpleasantness. The victims of her indignation could not guess what on earth was the matter and their sensitive souls suffered — which was only justice, would have been Regina's verdict had she surmised it. Instead, she waited stolidly for that "ease" of which her mother had spoken. The longer she waited, the further ease went. When the wriggling embarrassment had endured through a really frightful half-hour, Regina wisely gave up expecting ease to appear and decided to precipitate her evil moment.

"Speak a piece," she said peremptorily, frowning fiercely and pointing a stern finger at Doretta.

"W-w-what?" stammered Doretta.

"You have to have a piece. Speak it."

"O-oh, I-I c-can't!" stuttered Doretta wildly. To lack both wraps and a piece momentarily unseated her reason. "I didn't know this was speaking. I never learned anything. True and honest I never."

Mrs. Pettison who had just looked in and who took Doretta's reluctance for the usual disclaimings of genius preparing nevertheless to go into action, stole out again quite satisfied.

Down Doretta's plump cheeks were now pouring two rivers of tears. Regina glared at this misery of inability till she felt fully convinced of its genuineness. Then she levelled her angry finger at Paul.

"Speak a piece," she ordered.

He was astounded.

"I won't," he said simply. His character was commendably decided.

Regina considered him darkly, thoughtfully. Her acquaintance with him warned her that his utterance was truth. So she menaced yet another.

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"Speak a piece," she demanded of the outraged Cecil.

"Speak yourself," he retaliated angrily.

"The noblest place for man to die is where he dies for man," complied she gloomily. Then she impaled Hugh on her relentless forefinger.

"Speak a piece."

"I've forgotten mine," he replied with plausible sweetness. "I learned a fine one for you but I've been having such a nice time here I've forgotten."

"I wouldn't tell fibs," advised Regina blackly, while she waited.

"I've forgotten," he repeated stubbornly. The mulish film which crept over the heavenly blue of his eye was unmistakable. Regina desisted.

"Speak a piece," she demanded of Elsie. She ought to have known better.

Elsie smiled.

Regina frowned.

Elsie smiled.

Regina deepened the frown.

Elsie widened the smile. Two big dimples

appeared, one on each side of it, till her mouth looked like a dumb-bell. Then Regina gave her up.

With her compelling eye on Angela, Regina wavered. Angela flirted her dancing curls and exposed the pink tip of a kittenish tongue. Her position in the Pettison household as Rex's future wife made her impudently independent. Regina held the opinion that Angela was too pretty and too flighty to make an acceptable sister-in-law. Moreover, she was afraid of her. She passed her over in silence.

"Speak a piece," she said, coming to her weary end — Rex.

"'Tis a fearful thing in winter to be shattered by the blast and hear the rattling trumpet thunder cut away the mast," said he feebly. He was very weak for the hour of conundrums was at hand. He cleared his throat and asked desperately,

"When is a door a jar? I mean, When is a door not a door?"

Appearing again and hearing this, Mrs. Pettison again stole away satisfied.

"When is a door not a door?"

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But the mutual and successful war waged against "speaking" had broken down some few barriers of reserve and a flicker of conversation was begun.

"Do you know what I told her?" Doretta was gabbling.

"No," answered Angela, darting a prettily nervous look at Cecil who had dared to move from his allotted chair and had sidled to the sofa. With some sinister purpose written large upon his face he was stealthily possessing himself of a sofa pillow.

"Told her she was a naughty, mean story teller!" said Doretta triumphantly.

"You didn't," cooed Angela, by way of politest acquiescence.

"Did, too!" cackled Doretta, glowing with delight. "An' then —"

"When is a door not a door?" wedged in Rex sepulchrally.

Doretta stared him to silence, then continued —

"I told her 'at if she said any more wrong stories about me I'd slap her good, I would."

"You didn't!" observed Angela still agreeing genially.

"Did, too!" whooped Doretta with an ultra-joyous hitch in her seat.

"When is a door not a door?" persisted Rex, sublime in heroism.

"And she didn't dass to after that."

"*When is a door —*"

Right here the sofa pillow took him. It removed him from his chair and deposited him with neither haste nor noise upon the floor. The list of conundrums fluttered under the piano, *far* under, just as though it were human. Rex rose to a sitting posture, removed the cushion from his features and used them to gaze inquiringly at Cecil.

"Shut up," said Cecil, thus covering the entire ground in a masterly manner. "The party's going to begin. All ready for 'Throw the Handkerchief!'"

Snatching a trival piece of cambric from Angela, he rolled it into a wad, pounded it well, hurled it into Doretta's lap, then made a rush at her and kissed her. He was businesslike all through. But electric action descended upon his comrades like a gift from heaven.

Though the flattered Doretta duly squealed, her

face was radiant. From the very start she had been hopeful that the party would get around sometime, and here it was! Excitedly rolling up the wad, she dropped it upon the still prostrate but very interested Rex, haled him muscularly to his feet, and upon his pink and shyly averted cheek planted a big, moist salute.

Prompt and chivalrous, Rex cast the gauge at little Elsie (he *wanted* to kiss Angela, and that's why he didn't) chased her, made a pleasant capture under the sofa and gently kissed her into a smile that really meant something.

Ofttimes wondrous are the ways of the meek — Elsie wasted no minutes in uncertainty. She aimed firmly at Hugh and got him. By now, every body was on at least one foot and was giddily hopping. The kissers were all “heady” with achievement, the kissed were vocally triumphant, while the as yet un-kissed danced and shrilled in riotous anticipation. When Regina got kissed and slapped her swain resoundingly, the shrieks of delight shook the chandeliers.

Hearing, perforce, this outburst of purest mirth,

Mrs. Pettison applauded her choice of chaste conundrums, and wondered which one they had gotten to.

After a second time round, the game lost zest and "Snap the Whip" was substituted. So they all stood up and took hands in a line topped by the biggest boy and tapering down to little Elsie. Then with blood-curdling yowls, the line careened madly about the parlour (annihilating bric-a-brac of loose construction) the little tail-enders "snapping" off at intervals and bumping themselves badly against the furniture, to everybody's hilarious satisfaction, their own included.

Indeed, the Pettisons' party was growing to be a complete success when Mrs. Pettison sternly hurried in with the tray of refreshments. She flashed such sadly poignant glances at the flushed and hysterical revellers that they came at once to a petrified standstill. They had been immediately made aware of her entrance from the awkward fact that they had nearly snapped Elsie into the lemonade pitcher.

"I am amazed and mortified," said Mrs. Pettison. She looked it. "Please sit down."

Quite as intelligently outraged in their sensibilities as if they had been adults, but helpless to retaliate, the chagrined children sought out their respective chairs. Abased, they climbed methodically into them and leaned far back, wishing as little as possible to bulk upon the unfortunate occasion. Blind as to how, they found themselves each possessed of a cooky. For mournful moments a cooky is a crumbly article and eats *hard*. The assembly audibly choked. An unfortunate minority of chokers tried to ameliorate their malady by quick gulps of lemonade and then disaster resulted. Bad as the business was, they nevertheless stuck to it and soon had plates cleared and glasses empty. A few sanitary candies melted swiftly like snow flurries in May.

Of course, with the disappearance of the delicacies, any party is most naturally at an end. The twins' guests commenced to slide towards the portières and to slip upstairs for their belongings. If anybody was loath to have them go, it certainly was neither Rex nor Regina. On the contrary, both did their shameless best to cut short the conven-

tional farewells. And great was their success. They were finally alone. Standing, forlornly uncertain, in the middle of the suddenly deserted parlour they looked pitifully tiny.

“You need not help me ; you may sit down and talk over the enjoyment you have had,” said Mrs. Pettison, waving them to the sofa.

She was warmed with the thought that (excepting for a brief moment of deplorable rowdyism) she had given a truly delightful time to her children and their friends. In her housewifely activity, she had already tidied the parlour and now hustled away to attend to the pantry. However, hearing from the twins’ vicinity no murmur whatever of gay reminiscence, she soon came back to master the situation.

If their “at home” had been a thing of joy, then joy is a narcotic ; for, clasped tight in each other’s comforting arms, Rex and Regina were thankfully asleep.

A FRUIT OF THE FAIR

A FRUIT OF THE FAIR

HEARING sounds from below which indicated that Rex and Regina had come home, Mrs. Pettison, always heroic about attending to her duties as a mother, reluctantly put down her magazine, *The Privileges of Parenthood*, and prepared to be "motherly" to the twins when they came to her room to report their Saturday outing. The *P. O. P.* insisted that parents should hold "smiling talks" with children. Mrs. Pettison took to motherhood with so fierce a seriousness that the prescribed smile came hard. But she never gave up. Mentally allowing her offspring time to remove their rubbers and place them in the rack in the hall, to fold their mittens and put them in the right hand lower pocket of their coats, to take off those coats and hang them upon the appointed pegs, and to balance their caps neatly and securely upon the collars of the pendent coats, she summoned the

maternal smile to her lips and glanced towards the door.

On the very minute the twins appeared. When they saw the smile their hearts sank. They knew there was conversation to be met. Left to themselves they could gabble for hours, but in the presence of their mother they were so preoccupied about standing on both their feet, refraining from "twiddling," taking their hands from their pockets, not whistling, throwing their shoulders out, holding their chins up, not frowning, turning their heads aside when they coughed or sneezed, saying "pardon me" when they sniffed, holding their elbows in, keeping their eyes upon the speaker — doing so many painful things all at the one horrible moment — that they had no shred of brains left for genial converse.

Mrs. Pettison, striving by example to discourage "mumbling," let these words drip pearl-like from her lips:

"Have my little son and little daughter had a pleasant time at the Fair?"

Had the pearly words been hot shot they could

not have caused worse pangs to the ears upon which they fell. Under the shock, the children convulsively gripped hands. The maternal eye lingered upon "little daughter," and little daughter wriggled in dumb anguish. The eye travelled coldly to little son.

"Yes, Mama," said little son, promptly. Whether he had ideas or not, Rex always had language.

"And did you see anybody we know?" The eye was upon the daughter again.

"Yes, Mama," said Regina. It seemed safe. It had worked all right with Rex.

"Whom?"

Whom indeed! How fatal are the depths of speech! How quagmire compared with the solidity of silence! Regina despairingly rolled unhappy orbs at Rex.

"We met Miss Arthur, the school teacher," he said suavely.

"Do not be foolish, Rex," reprimanded his mother, still dutifully smiling, though mirth was an emotion far from her mind; "you *went* with Miss Arthur. Of course you saw her."

"Of course, Mama," agreed Rex. He looked at her hopefully, as if interested to know how she intended further to juggle with words. She changed the subject.

"Can you not tell me about the wonderful, the instructive exhibits?" The long words Mrs. Pettison pronounced with extra distinctness.

Either the ominous pearliness or the very richness of their memory kept the twins speechless. Of all those glorious sights, which merited first attention — the machinery, the fountain, the balloon, the animals, the sedate ride on the lumpy camel, or the more reckless voyage on the roller coast? This last bright remembrance was Regina's complete undoing.

"The best time I had was bumping around on the Holy Ghost!" she cried. She glowed pleasantly.

"What?"

This word came so explosively from her mother that Regina shivered and gripped Rex tighter.

"Is it a bad word? Is 'bumping' a bad word?" she wailed, immense tears already dotting her lashes.

"Roller coast," murmured Rex, helpfully.

"Rolly ghost," chattered Regina very quickly. Speedy correction might stave off possible bad results.

Silently, sadly, Rex shook his head. Adept in language, he knew that his dear twin had failed to redeem herself.

"*Holy Ghost !*" hissed Mrs. Pettison, the words gushing out like profanity.

"*Holy Ghost !*" copied Regina, equally profane.

"Well?" queried Mrs. Pettison awfully. "What do you know about the Holy Ghost?"

"Nothing, Mama; nothing!" roared Regina, with the ardour of complete innocence.

"Rex!" implored his mother. Rex always knew everything a child was wanted to know.

"The roller coast is a sort of shoot-the-chutes," began Rex, obligingly.

"And the Holy Ghost —" prompted Mrs. Pettison, feverish for the climax.

"— and the Holy Ghost — isn't." Rex seemed to be done. He looked self-approving.

Mrs. Pettison panted. Made aware by this sound

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that his contribution lacked fatness, Rex put forth superhuman effort and added:

"It — it goes to Sunday-school — I believe."

"Where you shall go — both of you — to-morrow!" ejaculated Mrs. Pettison, waving them from her sight. She was anxious to find out what the *P. O. P.* had to say about the properest age for children to receive religious instruction.

The twins pallidly left the room.

"We'd better get the book of texts," advised

Rex, when in the safety of the hall, "and learn one before to-morrow. The Sunday-school teacher will ask us for one."

"What's tecks?" demanded Regina, glowering.

"It's — a — a receipt — a religious receipt."

"What for?"



The twins pallidly left the room

"For writing sermons, I think."

"What do we have to write a sermon for?"

"We don't."

"What's the use of a tecks to us then?"

"I don't know. But we have to have it. And a penny. You can't go to Sunday-school without a text and a penny."

"We never have a penny," and Regina cheered visibly.

"You mothers give you the penny."

"What for?" dropping back into hopelessness.

"To put in the plate."

"What plate?"

"For the heathen."

"What heathen?"

Whenever Regina gave evidence of having untied the knot in her what-string, Rex knew that she needed immediate diversion, so he steered her into the library and began a search for their "Children's Bible."

Mrs. Pettison was one of these very pure women, to whom everything is impure, so she allowed her

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children access only to a sort of expunged, ærated Holy Writ — very moral.

Rex found it and was soon deep in the luxury of study. Both twins had early taken to literature as a solace, the girl flightily, the boy like a sage.



"Soon deep in the luxury of study"

She was proud of his superior gifts, but was none the less sullenly envious of his ability always to find peace within book covers, she herself being ever too smartingly conscious of a blighted past, a bitter present, or an ill-omened future, to take

more than a surface interest in anything the library afforded.

After chewing her braids for several morbid moments, she hurled herself upon Rex and wrenched the volume from him.

"Give me the tecks," she growled; "it's both of our books."



"Hunted for the shortest verse she could find"

"It is only one 'book,' Regina, and the word is 'texts,'" insinuated Rex gently.

"Keep still and let me learn a receipt," rejoined Regina, ungrateful for instruction. She fell to the floor, the book under her much as if she had tackled a football, and hunted for the shortest verse she could find. The ringing of the supper bell brought her but small comfort.

"And this is our night for squogged oats and water-cress," she observed sorrowfully. She would have liked to support her text with something more substantial, but knew better than to expect it. Mrs. Pettison, following suggestions in the food column of the *P. O. P.*, was at present furnishing her table with uncooked grains and raw vegetables. The food column maintained that such a diet would prolong life. So far, no death had occurred in the Pettison family to discredit the statement.

It was a household wonderfully well ordered. and on the morrow the array of the twins for Sunday-school was accomplished with so little flurry as to seem an every-day occurrence. Perhaps Mrs. Pettison braided Regina's hair tighter than usual. That was all.

"It is never nice to see a little girl's hair dishevelled, particularly on Sunday," she remarked, tying the ends with blue bows instead of the week-day red.

Dishevelled. Rex played with the word quite a while in silence. He liked new words, and he liked,

too, to discover their meaning for himself. But his mother had used "dishevelled" indefinitely. It might mean unplaited or it might mean tied with red. So he asked about it.

"Dishevelled means not properly arranged," he was told.

The possibilities of the new world kept him busy and happy during the walk to Sunday-school. Mrs. Pettison went with them to the little church nearby,



put them in Miss Kate's infant class, and there left them.

The several classes were penned into separate pews and teachers sat in chairs in the aisle and instructed their wriggling charges.

"Perhaps Mrs. Pettison braided Regina's hair tighter than usual"

The shocked

twins felt that it was all very indecorous, for they had been to church service once and had carried away with them as one of their most wonderful and beautiful memories a sense of the solemn sacredness of the building. From a white-robed far-off man had come to their devout ears words of majestic seriousness; from a choir invisible had floated strains of an unearthly sweet music; the fragrance of lilies had crept into their hearts like a prayer; the very silences had blessed them with mystery; and in marvelling at the mystic earnestness of the worshippers they too had worshipped — who shall say unacceptably?

This scene was different. A constant hum prevailed. Sometimes a snort pierced the hum, or a giggle, or a little girl's starched skirt rustled, or a little boy's boot banged a pew, or a book dropped, or a teacher uttered a reprimand — much needed, doubtless, but jarring.

Miss Kate's class being the youngest was the wriggliest; moreover, the children changed places constantly and without premeditation — like love-birds on a crowded perch. The tiny girls were mostly always measuring the widths of the ribbons on

their extraordinary hats; and the tiny boys were mostly doing queer things with their pennies, putting them in their ears and their mouths, or trying to hold them in their eyelids. Not all of the little boys, however, had pennies; and those who hadn't had candy in a rear pocket. Never once did the combination of a penny *and* candy arrive in one boy. It was odd.

Another odd thing was the gorgeousness of the general apparel. At first the twins thought they must have fallen among celestials until calm scrutiny discovered just ordinary boys and girls above the ruffled collars and below the beflowered hats. The biggest surprise was Minnie McCarty. Minnie was the grocer's little girl and on week-



"Her long hair was flowing in ripples till it looked like a golden washboard"

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days wore spotted clothes, had her red hair in a frowsty pig-tail, sported bad manners, and was reckoned an undesirable acquaintance. But to-day her raiment was blue silk, her long hair was flowing in ripples till it looked like a golden washboard, and her hat was as big as a parasol, and was made



all out of pink and white daisies. Anybody with such clothes up her sleeve, so to speak, was well worth knowing. The twins promptly promoted her to a place among the desirables. The charmingest surprise

*"Just a bewitching bunch of
curls"*

—at least to Rex —
was Angela, the lady

of his yearning heart. To describe her were impossible. She was just a bewitching bunch of curls, coquetry, dimples, and smiles. Everything about her floated, from the butterfly bows in her halo of curls, to the tassels on her shoes. Rex

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'Angela became unduly acrobatic and went right over''

felt a warm religious fervour growing upon him as he caught her flying smiles.

Wiggly as the class was when seated, it was worse standing, for then it climbed upon the prayer stools, pressed its diaphragm against the top of the pew in front, and

balanced itself thereon. Angela became unduly acrobatic and went right over

"Ah!" cried Rex.

Miss Kate looked at him apprehensively. "Angela's gone over the — the — dashboard," he explained weakly.

But Angela appeared at her teacher's side as good as new, squeezed into the pew again, wriggled to her former place, and continued her interrupted stunt. Miss Kate taught serenely on, trusting that her charges might soak in through the pores some

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of the wisdom they refused to hearken to with their ears. Yet they got something that way, too. When Miss Kate asked them to repeat such and such a verse in concert, they generally did it.

"All together, now," she would say sweetly; "the Golden Rule."

Then came a willing chorus: "Done truthers. As Sue would have! Others done! To you!"

"Very good indeed. I want you to sit down now and we'll each repeat a text. Sit down, dears."

Flutter, flutter, flutter, wriggle, wriggle, wriggle, biff, bang, giggle — and they were down.

"Now, Minnie."

Minnie blushed, gasped, and thought terrifically; then lisped:

"Love yennemies."

"Very sweet. Elsa."

"Love — one nuther," cooed Elsa.

"Yes, dear. Albert."

"Love — love — love —" here Albert gagged on his penny which was in his mouth.

"Well, another time, Albert. Rex."

"He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself

shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot." said Rex, musically, his big eyes fixed on Miss Kate's.

She looked at him with rampant amaze.

"I can go on if you want any more," he volunteered.

"No; that is enough," said Miss Kate. "I don't think you understand it as it is."

"Yes, Miss Kate, I understand it."

"Tell us, then,"

"Next Sunday, Miss Kate; not to-day."

"Why not to-day?"

"Because I *know* what it means but I can't *say* it yet."

"Why?"

"Because the words of the meaning — in my mind — are — are dishevelled."

"Are what?"

"Dishevelled," repeated Rex, firmly, unwinkingly.

Putting this down to impertinence or imbecility, and not anxious to probe either state, Miss Kate passed on to Regina.

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"God is a mocker. Strong drink is ragtime," said Regina gruffly. She disapproved of it herself.

"Oh, my dear! Wine. Raging. Say it again, please."

"God is a mocker. Strong drink is ragtime. Wine. Raging," said Regina, blindly obedient.

Mrs. Pettison prided herself upon the twins' obedience and called it their "strong point." It was really their weakest, for they were obedient beyond reason — to the point of idiocy. When they were not kept steadily busy being obedient, they were quite normal.

Miss Kate looked as though she thought them far from such, but she was spared the necessity of dealing with them because of an opportune interruption from James Akers.

"Annie Haddon couldn't come to-day; her baby sister died," he said, by way of a text.

"And is going to be put in the ground," supplemented Minnie, grewsofely.

Angela paled and shuddered. A sympathetic shudder attacked every other little girl. Miss Kate seized the opportunity to give a striking talk upon

immortality and the hope held out to believers. She concluded by saying most impressively:

"The dead are not dead. Their souls go to heaven. Their love lives on. The grave gets only their bodies."

"*Only their bodies?*" demanded Rex, thunder-struck.

"*Only their bodies,*" she repeated, convincingly.

"I wonder," whispered Rex in a horrified aside to his twin, "I wonder what's done with their arms and legs."

Regina grinned blithely as one whose imagination holds out pleasing visions.

"Listen, little ones," now warned Miss Kate; "we are going to say 'We humbly pray thee, O Father.' Get ready."

The initiated promptly dropped on the floor and hunched themselves into the attitude of devotion. The twins, being strangers, sat bolt upright. Miss Kate waited a moment, hoping intuition would come to their aid. It did. Being woman's natural gift, it reached Regina first. Under its enlightening influence she thumped Rex on the back.

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"Hump!" she hissed. "All the others are humping. You have to hump to pray. Hump."

They too slid to the floor and joined devoutly in the petition which, to Regina at least, began intelligently thus: "We hump to pray Thee, Our Father."

When they again scrambled to their seats something was doing up in front, and kept coming steadily nearer. It was a very conscious boy. He held a sort of filagree frying-pan — a wire basket attached to a stick — and he poked the article into each pew that he passed and then withdrew it. When it appeared under Regina's nose, she started back distrustfully.

"It's for your penny," whispered Rex.

"You said 'plate,'" argued she.

"Put it in," said her patient counsellor.



"*'Hump!'*" she hissed . . . "*'You have to hump to pray.'*"

A FRUIT OF THE FAIR

"In the corn-popper?"

"Yes."

Regina dropped in her penny and left off worrying. If the heathen chose to call that thing a plate what was it to her? The collection over, a greater relaxation was observable in the already relaxed classes. They gathered up their belongings and stood in the aisles. Suddenly the organ pealed joyously out with the child-beloved hymn "Onward, Christian Soldiers," and everybody began to sing and march. When she came to the lines,

*"Christ, our Royal Master, leads against the foe,
Forward into battle, see His banners go!"*

Regina was surprised to find herself out in the street. It was all over then. Evidently; for Mrs. Petition was there awaiting them.

"Have my little boy and girl been interested?" she asked, with unfailing radiance.

The twins looked at each other dubiously. Had they?

"Tell Mother what you have learned."

Rex saw "Holy Ghost" in her eye.

"We learned nothing at all about what we didn't know yesterday," he said firmly and diplomatically.

"Has my little daughter (don't squint, Regina) nothing to tell Mother?"

Regina cast about desperately in her memory to see if anything of the morning's business yet lingered there. There did — the last words she had sung.

"I learned 'Our Royal Master leans against the post,'" she said.

Mrs. Pettison looked unconvinced.

"Surely," she urged, "you have made a mistake. Is it not 'leads against the foe'?"

"Not in our school," said Regina doggedly. "In our school he leans against the post. I heard them say so."

Mrs. Pettison surveyed the two with some severity.

"You seem to have learned but little for this morning's time," she criticised coldly. "Think well, and then answer this question: Do you feel that you derive enough benefit from your instruction to care to go regularly?"

Rex studied the blue vault of heaven for a few devout moments, and then said earnestly:

"Yes, Mama."

Regina, after knotting her brows in fearful thought, arrived at the same conclusion:

"Yes, Mama."

Mrs. Pettison was satisfied.

How was she to know that Rex felt drawn to the throne of grace solely by his desire and intention of many times sitting next to the dimpling Angela, or that Regina's whole incentive was her determination further to enjoy those exhilarating callisthenics on the "dashboard"?



"Those exhilarating callisthenics on the 'dashboard' "

HIS JOURNEY TO THE GATES



HIS JOURNEY TO THE GATES

REX Pettison was not as comfortable within as might be. He dimly realized that his condition threatened to grow worse, and it disheartened him. In that house, the mere fact of being a little boy was trouble enough without being a little boy of unsettled insides.

Though, to be sure, if you took Regina's word for it, being a little girl was a bad business, too.

That they were twins only made everything worse. Twins seemed to be something that had to be looked at a great deal. Twins apparently were everybody's affair, even strangers'. Twins could not do a thing without being caught.

Then, too, one was always being flourished before the other as a warning or an example — generally a warning.

Also, it was held to be wrong in either of them to possess a characteristic which the other did not.

Regina was constantly harried and hounded because she was not born a philologist, as was her brother. Rex, in his turn, was exhorted day upon day to emulate his sister's up-to-dateness of activity, whereas he loved calmly and philosophically to ruminate. Then — impossible to believe, but true — the adults occasionally varied the schedule of complaints by begging Regina for pity's sake to try to keep quiet like her brother, and by coldly

advising Rex not to "parrot his elders," but to try to talk naturally, like his sister.

They were as unlike as a rhinoceros and a chipmunk, but they were made to feel that it was all due to their own wrong lack of interest in the vital matter of resembling each other. Why, if



"Not comfortable
within"

HIS JOURNEY TO THE GATES

Rex grew untimely sleep-stricken, Regina, too, was sent to bed. If Regina felt wilted, Rex likewise was dosed with boiled water.

At this particular moment he wondered if it were possible that she felt as queer as he. He would find out. They were both in the garden, supposedly weeding it.

"Sister, do you feel hollow in your body, shaky in your legs, giddy in your head, and hot while you are cold?"

Regina grinned with interest.

"How many guesses do I have?" she asked.

"It's not a conundrum," said Rex sadly.

Regina looked and felt aggrieved.

"No, I don't. Why?"

"I do."

"Why?"

Making no attempt to explain, he put his head down on the garden bed and lay there quietly. Regina felt sorry for him, but she thriftily went on weeding. It was open-air exercise insisted upon by their mother, who at the expiration of the allotted time, would appear, watch in hand, to see if they

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"He put his head down on the garden bed and lay there quietly"

had performed their full duty, to commend them unenthusiastically if they had, to reprove them with dispassionate justice if they had not, and to lay out for them their next hour of the day. Mrs. Pettison believed in system. That is why Regina kept on weeding.

Rex was deaf to the dictates of prudence.

Now, if one could feel that one's mother was just the best thing in the world to make a sick place well, there might be some fun in illness. Rex never dreamed of so much impossibility. From his very

babyhood a mysterious fetich, called Molly Coddle, had kept him from his share of petting. What Molly Coddle had not robbed him of, self-reliance *had*.

Mr. Pettison insisted that his son should not be Molly Coddled. Mrs. Pettison insisted that her son should be made self-reliant.

Consequently, if Rex fell down he had to pick himself up again — so as to become self-reliant. If he scratched his finger, he first had to wash the microbes out of the sore and then had to forget it forever after — not to be a Molly Coddle. If he awoke in the night, thirsty, he had to remember that there was a filter in the hall and that he could get water for himself without waking others — so as to be self-reliant. If he awoke frightened with dreams about ghosts, he was to remember that dreams and ghosts had no existence, and he wasn't to cry out — so as to escape being a Molly Coddle.

Molly Coddles got rocked to sleep when they felt mother-loving; Rex never. Those who undervalued self-reliance had their bumped places kissed; Rex had to ask Catherine for vinegar and anoint himself.

Regina hazily was of the opinion that only a Molly Coddle would dare to lie on the grass when it ought to be weeding. She would not for anything be in a Molly Coddle's shoes; for there was Mrs. Pettison bearing down upon them.

Rex sat up, dizzyier than ever. His mother stared at him sternly. Whether or not she felt as unpleasant as she looked is another matter. But *obedience* had been the platform of the Mothers' Club for several years, and in conscientious effort to be all that she should as secretary of the association, Mrs. Pettison had become very disagreeable at home. The only break she had allowed herself in the monotony of firmness was a week or so after a lecture delivered upon "Letting Children Alone to Allow Them to Find Themselves." For fourteen frantically giddy days Rex and Regina had been let alone, but they had found such a fearful lot of other things besides themselves that the severity when resumed had been of sterner stuff than before. The look which Rex now received was awe-inspiring. Regina's portion was a smile, dignified and temperate.

"My little girl's diligence pleases Mother. *I am happy.*" This admission, according to the best authorities, was the noblest reward a child could receive.

Regina looked frightened to death. What on earth was her proper reply? In that house one had to say something immediately when a pause came; if one waited too long, one got badgered into making some statement of so horrible a nature that one got punished for it.

"Yes, Mama," said Regina desperately. It passed.

"But you, Rex, have disappointed me, grieved me, astounded me."

In the impelling, majestic pause, Rex merely blinked with an unconcern which appealed to his sister as nothing short of suicidal.

"You have been moping for several days, but I have not reproved you, trusting you would come to your senses of your own accord."

Come to his senses! He was several thousand miles away from them right now, in Regina's moderate estimation, for he maintained his fateful

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serenity. Even his mother felt thrilled with a species of fright. She resorted to a remark calculated to electrify.

"I shall be obliged to punish you. Do you understand?"

Rex clawed some sand — peaceably, nonchalantly.

"Do you hear me, *sir*?"

The intensity of that *sir* was successful — in a measure. Rex lifted his troubled eyes and spoke.

"I can't put 'peripatetic' back in the bag," he said.

Appearances to the contrary, he had been very busy while he lay on the ground. His memory was a storehouse of long words — words caught surreptitiously from grown-up conversations, or plucked laboriously from printed pages. He had been rolling those treasured words of his around like so many marbles. His glittering favourite was "peripatetic" There was, therefore, a certain coherence in his speech. He said it again, more faintly:

"Peripatetic. It won't go back in the bag."

His mother dropped on her knees and folded him

HIS JOURNEY TO THE GATES

in her arms. He felt himself being carried into the house. Was he to be punished? What form would



"He felt himself being carried into the house"

it take? Evidently none, just at present, for there was fear, not anger, in his mother's voice as she called to Catherine and gave the order:

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"Telephone to Doctor Wismer."

Doctor Wismer! Hearing this, Rex felt more than ever uneasy, lacking confidence in the man who, the last time he was called in, had inconsiderately and carelessly left behind him a strange baby which they had to look after ever since.

True, Mrs. Pettison said that the doctor had been but an agent of heaven — that God had sent the baby. But Rex, being a Christian and wishing to remain one, preferred to consider Doctor Wismer the sole offender.



"What is the matter with me?" the invalid asked of Regina"

HIS JOURNEY TO THE GATES

He came. He made himself obnoxious from the start and had Rex put to bed.

"What is the matter with me?" the invalid asked of Regina. She had been listening to the Wismerian directions imparted to her mother. She knit her brows and scowled in honest endeavour to remember.

"Bites," she said at length.

"Bites?"

"Microbites." She looked doubtful and miserable. She hated to fail her brother in time of need. Microbes had something to do with it anyhow. She heard the doctor say so.

"Is it catching?"

"I think so."

"Is there a sign on our house?"

With one long, glorified, hopeful, rapturous look at the kindly brother who had made such a lovely thing possible, Regina slid out to make an examination. She came back on wings. She at once began to spell, so as not to forget.

"S-C-A-R-L-E-T F-E-V-E-R W-I-T-H-I-N."

She was hustled out of the room, and it was weeks before she got in again.

SCARLET FEVER
WITHIN



Rex really did not miss her, so many odd things happened. About the oddest was the disappearance of whole pieces of the day. Any hour of the twenty-four was liable to drop right out of sight—like a board from the bottom of the wash-tub—and leave a gap.

After one of these gaps he came back from somewhere and found that he was in the best spare bedroom. Spare? It was spare enough now, goodness knows, because the white curtains were gone, the pictures were removed, the rugs were up, and the portières were down. "Spare" was the word.

There came some more gaps. Then Rex discovered that the spare room belonged to someone else besides himself. She was a quiet lady who wore a cap and an apron, even

HIS JOURNEY TO THE GATES

at night. People called them trained nurses — why, he did not know. She was very quiet. He used to forget she was there. Then, first thing he knew, a spoon would glide through the air and stop under his nose. She would be on the other end of it. Whenever she had not anything else to do she would make him take a dry smoke — on a glass cigarette.

He did everything she mentioned. Her voice made him. She, the doctor, and his mother, all spoke in the same tone — as if he, Rex, had pig-headedly chosen to be ill, in spite of their best advice to the contrary. He grew discouraged.

One day, while he stayed in bed —



"People called them trained nurses — why, he did not know."

for he could see the ceiling all the time — he and the bed and the ceiling went to an awful place, full of bad sounds and wild beasts. The nurse was very much of a brick that time. She put her arms around him and kept the things away.

Then came the day that he was dying. He talked all the time. He could hear it himself. The doctor seemed to be there every moment. Catherine came in too, and begged that Father Jennings be sent for because Father Jennings had the way with him. Regina was brought in and was lifted up to kiss him. His father and mother were both there — holding on to each other.

He had a great deal of trouble with the ceiling. Sometimes it was bright and glaring and far off, like the sky, and other times it was black and used to fall on him. The falling part was dreadful, but afterwards it was quiet and peaceful, and it was generally night.

Right in the middle of the dying business the ceiling fell — on top of everybody, the nurse, the doctor, Catherine, Regina, and his father and mother. Then the usual calm followed and he went to sleep.

The hall clock woke him. It struck "one" — midnight. The room was dark, except in one corner, where there was a shaded lamp. All the world was asleep. The world was solemn — and cold, too. Only he, of all the world, was awake. No, there was his mother.

She was close beside the bed, in a rocking-chair, but she did not rock. She had on a blue wrapper. It looked very nice around the neck, because it had no collar. He thought no collar must feel much nicer than the stiff, high white one that she always wore. She looked very tired. Her hair was plaited like Regina's. She was like someone else's mother. He remembered that he had not spoken to her, oh, for years and years. He spoke, and his voice boomed like the clock, yet it was a tiny voice, too.

"Mama."

"Yes, my baby."

Her baby! Then Wismer had been at his old trick.

No — wonderful — he, Rex, was her baby, for she was leaning over him, her hand on his.

The world was still asleep, still quiet and dark.

but it did not seem cold or lonely any more. To have a hand to hold — that makes the difference.

“Does my boy want something?”

Truly, nothing, but to wonder at the queerness and niceness of having conversation in the middle of the night.

“Does my little one want a drink?”

“Yes,” said Rex, experimentally, curious of what might follow.

What *did* was the total smashing of self-reliance. She brought the drink, she held the glass, she raised his head, she put it back on the pillow, she replaced the glass. He had only to swallow.

Oh, the bliss of lying there in bed and being cared for without being scolded! She seemed shining with happiness to think that there was something she could do for him. She did not appear to worry at all that self-reliance was on its last legs.

His mind wandered irresistibly to thoughts of Molly Coddle. Was Molly Coddle dead, too? He would soon see.

“Mama.”

“Yes, my dearest.”

"The bed hurts."

"My poor baby."

"Won't you rock me — just this once?"

Molly Coddle was everlastingly squelched.

His mother made a cooing sound, the way a cat does when she comes back to her basket of kittens, and cuddled him in her arms. She put him inside the blue wrapper and tucked the ends around his feet. He lay in a warm, dark nest. It was soft and lacy. When he put up his hand there was a locket to play with. And all the time he was rocked. It was lovely. He was happy.

Was he happy? Surely; yet why did tears slip from his eyes and wet his cheek? Why did he feel as if he had been spanked — and had not done anything at all.

"Mama."

"Yes, sonny."

"I am glad I came back."

"From where, dear?"

"I don't know — but haven't I been away?"

"Once I was afraid so, my darling."

"Well, I'm glad I came back."

"And I, my own."

"Mama."

"Yes, baby."

"Tell me a story."

"Once upon a time —" she began, and stopped.

"That's the way. Go on."

"Once upon a time —" again she stopped.

He waited, wondering. How was he to know certain things? That Jack the Giant Killer had not been told to him on account of its persistent goriness; that Cinderella was false and foolish; that Blue Beard was immoral; that the White Cat inculcated cruelty to animals; that, briefly, all the golden tales of fairyland were held to be menacing to the teachings of modern education? The lips that were pressed regretfully against his curly head were barren of tales and helplessly ignorant of their sweet witchery.

How dim the light was! How cool the stillness! And the house — he never dreamed a house could be so silent.

And at night one seems to be truly, truly one's self — not the self that other people want

one to be — as in the daytime. One dares say anything.

“Mama.”

“Yes, Rex.”

“You are crying.”

“Yes, my baby.”

“Why?”

“Because I cannot tell my little sick boy a story.”

She kissed him, actually *kissed* — without stopping to consider that she might give him germs of some sort, diphtheria, maybe, or that lovely long word that makes one think of potatoes — tuberculosis.

The kiss put miraculous strength into his weak arms, and he flung them tightly around her neck and clung there. He was not afraid of germs. He liked them. He liked his mother, too — now. She had turned into the kind that other boys have — the kind that tags around after one, and tickles one in the ribs, and picks things up — the proper sort.

“Never mind about that story, Mama; never mind. I’d like —”

“What, dear?”

THE PETTISON TWINS

"Something to eat."

Eating between meals was usually never to be mentioned, never to be thought of. The middle of the night was, from its very nature, between meals. Rex knew it, but he took chances that this third



"He flung them tightly around her neck and clung there"

bugaboo was weeping over the tomb of Molly Coddle and therefore inoperative so far as he was concerned. He was right.

"You are hungry? Oh, Rex, I am so glad."

She really said it. She seemed actually excited

over it. She put him gently back into his bed, and then she flew into the next room and awakened the nurse. Together they set to work and prepared him something. He got it. It was hot — rather thin, perhaps, but fairly comforting.

“Mama, I want to go to sleep.”

“Good-night, precious.”

“But, Mama —”

“Yes, boy.”

“The bed hurts.”

“Then come to mother’s arms, Rexie.”

She took him — she did. To and fro, in a drowsy nest, he was rocked into Sleepy-town. The rapture of it was almost enough to keep him awake. But it did not.

When morning came he was in his bed, and the nurse alone was on guard.

“Where is my Mama?”

“Sleeping.”

“Sleeping? The sun is shining.”

“But she is tired. She held you until day-break.”

“*Break*. I always wonder *what* it breaks.”

"The darkness!" said the nurse, smiling.
"Look!"

She raised the curtain. For the first time in many days he saw the outside world. It was too glaring to look at for long. The trees were so green that they hurt his eyes. The leaves flashed like the sun. The green seemed to flame and burn. Had the trees always been so blazing and beautiful? If so, why had he wished for anything more exciting than just to be allowed to go out and get closer to the glory? And, oh, the grass — it was no longer *one* object, commonplace and inevitable, but it was millions and millions of single, separate blades, each tipped with dew. The nurse drew down the curtain.

"Here is your breakfast," she said. "You have solid food this morning, you see. You are much better. You will soon be well."

The dab of milk toast looked anything but solid — positively airy — to one who could have made away with a saddle of mutton.

"How nice that was," he sighed, finishing it. The word "nice" annoyed him. It was so short

Being the pith of the sentence, it ought to be longer.

"Please get me my dictionary."

That much the nurse did; but she was adamant about letting him look into it. She compromised by reading him a few things that he felt the need of. What he wanted worse than the dictionary was that new mother of his. He longed and ached for some comfort.

"Where is my Mama?" was his constant question. He had bethought himself of several thousand indulgences which he intended to hint for.

Finally she appeared. One would never guess she had been up all night, so trim and fresh was she, so snug as to belt and so high as to collar.

"Oh, Mama," he cried, rapturously holding out his arms, "I have had a squeamish breakfast, and I think I'd like some squeamish pie for dinner."

"Squeamish?" said Mrs. Pettison, hurling a haughty look at the nurse.

"Squeamish?" said the nurse, casting an appealing look at Rex.

"It is in the dictionary," he answered. "You read it yourself. It says, squeamish means particu-

lar, nice. That's what the milk toast was. That's what I'd like the pie to be."

"Little boys should use words that they understand," advised his mother, quite in the old way. "And you will catch cold if you hold out your arms. Put them under the quilt."

"But I'd like you to rock me."

"Rock?" queried the mother with eyebrows drawn very high. "A big boy like you does not require rocking. It would be ridiculous."

"It wasn't ridiculous last night, was it?" asked Rex. He really wanted to know.

His mother austere laid her finger across her lips.

"Hush," she said, "even a sick little boy must not be impertinent to his mother."

Impertinent! Rex's chin quivered. He wildly cast about for something to say.

The glass of water at his hand gave him an idea.

"I — I — want a drink," he murmured. Heavy tears were in his eyes, but the disappointment in his heart was heavier still. "I want a drink! I want a drink!"

HIS JOURNEY TO THE GATES

"Well, why don't you take it ?" asked his mother, in tones of critical exasperation.

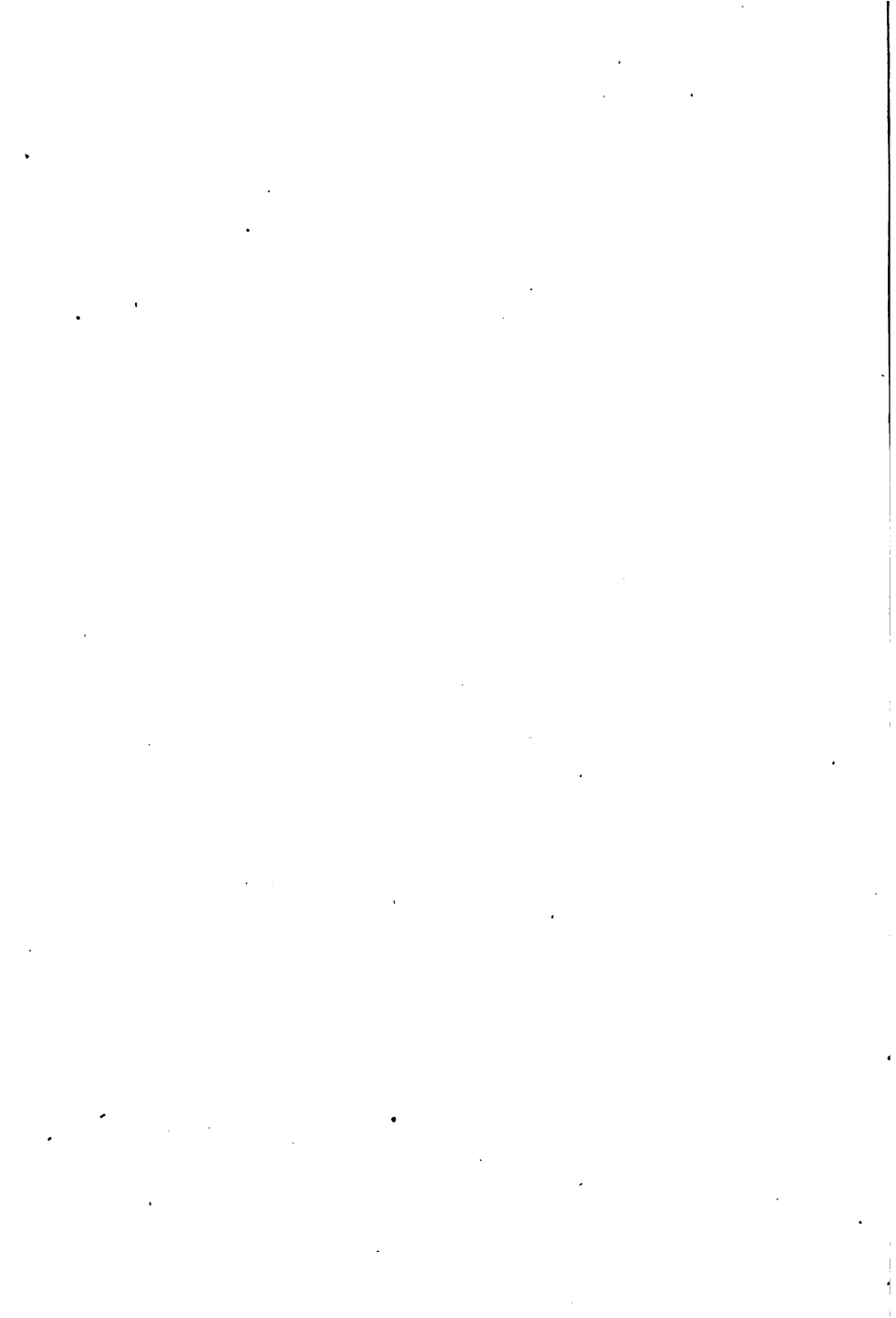
With utter despair he brought the glass to his lips and took a gulp. The water was harder to swallow than marbles. His task done, he turned his face to the wall and lay silent. He — miserable he — was better; and, horror of horrors, he would soon be *well*.



"The water was harder to swallow than marbles"



**THE DAY OF PRECIOUS
PENALTIES**



THE DAY OF PRECIOUS PENALTIES

WHEN the postman went, Rex Pettison bestirred his rather anæmic little legs, and fairly flew upstairs to the nursery to share his unwelcome information with his twin sister.

"Regina, the '*Privileges*' has come," he announced, not ungrammatically, either, "and Mama is already half through it."

"Oh, my good gracious! dear, oh dear!" wailed Regina, who took all things hard, and who took this thing particularly so. "What kind of trouble will we get now?"

"It won't be long before we find out," observed Rex gravely, aware that this, though true, was not comforting.

The Privileges of Parenthood was a monthly magazine devoted to the home management of children and to their intellectual and moral advancement; and by its helpful pages Mrs. Pettison was at pres-

ent steering her offspring, pinning her entire faith to its utterances. To speak vulgarly, she swallowed it whole, not picking and choosing among its blessings, but practising upon the defenceless twins each and every hint held out. They knew that they were being experimented upon, and very much disliked it. They knew, too, the source of the experiments, and hated the *Privileges* from cover to cover. The day of its arrival was always one of unpleasantness.

"What was it we got last time?" demanded Regina crossly.

Her memory was short — a merciful compensation for the fact that her suffering under educational affliction was extreme.

Rex took things philosophically, but never forgot them.

"It was out of the *Home Messenger*. We had to walk around the block and then come home and tell what we saw."

"Oh my, yes," remembered Regina shudderingly. She would rather ruminate than talk any day. Genteel conversation, such as she was forced

into by her father and mother, always brought her to hysterics.

"And," continued Rex, "we left off having cooked mush for breakfast, and had to chew hard on raw wheat — for our teeth and for our brains — and not wash it down with water, either," When he remembered, he did the job completely.

"I didn't mind that so much," confessed his sister, "it was like being chickens."

They spent some further time in reminiscence, and then a summons floated up to them.

"Rex! Regina!" called their mother, in sweet but compelling tones.

"Are my ends on?" demanded Regina gloomily, turning her back for inspection.

Rex carefully noted that her each braid was still clamped with its necessary bow of ribbon, and so informed her.

"You'd better poke *that* in," she advised morosely, pointing to his feet, and he obeyed her by attending to a dangling shoe-string.

Having thus in some measure guarded against unfavourable criticism, they apprehen-

sively went downstairs to their mother and the *Privileges*.

This month it contained, in addition to its usual budget of hints, two articles which appealed to Mrs. Pettison as magnificent. These articles were, "Make Confidants of Your Children" and "Rational Punishment," and along the lines of their advisement Mrs. Pettison intended to speak at once. Indeed, wherever possible she used the exact words of the editor.

"Come, my little son and daughter," she said, starting in at once in a high-comedy voice, as the twins laggingly approached, "let us have a friendly chat together."

It sounded ominous from the very beginning. To be "friendly" with one's mother smacked of the terrible, so the twins' eyes bulged with fear and they said nothing.

The magazine had made no provision whatever for anything but a joyous receptiveness, and Mrs. Pettison felt as if she had somehow run off the track, but she was too full of her subject to stop.

"We all make mistakes, grown folks as well as



*“Come, my little son and daughter, let us have a friendly
chat together”*

children,” she continued, modulating her voice to tender grief — as advised — “and I myself have made mistakes — sad ones, sad ones —”

She paused and waited for the sudden look of

love and sympathy which she had been told would be hers, but she did not get it, nor anything like it: her humble admission then and there lowered her very many degrees in the twins' respect.

In their estimation, an infallible mother, though a bad thing, was yet bearable, whereas a mistaken mother was a decidedly disgraceful possession.

"Perhaps — to make an instance," resumed Mrs. Pettison hurriedly, feeling that each pause was lost ground, "sometimes when I have punished you I may have been arbitrary. Do you know what 'arbitrary' means?"

"Yes," said Rex promptly. And he did.

"No," said Regina, gruff with embarrassment.

"I will tell you. It means — it means —" she floundered a little, and Rex looked sorrowful, as if he expected her to slip, for now that she was "mistaken" he did not feel sure of her at any point. She braced herself. "It means 'capricious, not just.' Punishment should always be just. Moreover, it should be rational. Rational punishment never provokes resentment. It explains itself. Perhaps I have not always been careful to have my punishments

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explain themselves. At times, you actually may have questioned my *right* to discipline you. Is it not so?"

Again she waited for affectionate comment, and again in vain. *Question her right?* They had never dreamed of such a thing! The ethics of infancy are simple: if you are good, you get praised; if you are naughty, you mostly get spanked. Why not? It is as plain as daylight.

"But a mistake may always be corrected," went on Mrs. Pettison, confusedly. Only a strong sense of duty kept her at it. She was not feeling fresh and happy as at the start.

The children in the magazine had made sweet little remarks, leading to an exchange of many beautiful thoughts; but the twins did nothing but awesomely gawk at her.

"I am going to try new methods of punishment. Scolding and whipping are irrational, and therefore useless. Yet wrong doing must be corrected. But how? A little patient thought will suggest the penalty, which must be the logical outcome of the wrong itself. Then it is accepted as inevitable and

right even by the sufferer. Shall we try this better way?"

She smiled a winsome invitation to them to open their hearts to her, but they had no reply to make. They felt that it would be frightful to say "no" and indiscreet to lunacy to say "yes," since this last was a tacit bid for chastisement and chastisement of an unknown nature. Silence was best.

Persisting bravely with her part, Mrs. Pettison put one arm around Rex and the other around Regina, and kissed them both. Polite though uncomprehending, Rex returned the kiss; but Regina took it flinching and with eyes shut as if she expected to get clipped, which was an action leading to false conclusions, Mrs. Pettison not having the clipping habit.

"Go now, dears, and think it over," she said, really exhausted with having nothing happen which should have happened.

According to the printed articles, the charming conversation should have hallowed a full half hour, and here it was, over as soon as commenced, after having led absolutely nowhere.

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The twins skimmed from sight as soon as they decently could. Left to herself, Mrs. Pettison was honest enough to admit that she had rushed into the business without sufficient preparation, and she felt that she would have to elucidate her "talk" by a backing of consistent action.

Meanwhile, Rex and Regina curled up in chairs and brooded over the thing in the peace of the nursery. They were dazed and depressed.



"Rex and Regina brooded over the thing in the peace of the nursery"

"Have we been bad?" demanded the girl. She could not otherwise account for the plentiful mention of the word "punishment."

"No, I think not."

"What was the matter, then?"

"Please let me alone."

This satisfied Regina, for she knew that her brother never indulged in throes of thought in vain, always arriving at solution through revery, so she bided his time.

And it was not long before he roused himself, looking brilliant.

"Sister, we aren't going to get spanked any more—"

"No,"

"Nor scolded —"

"No."

"But something queer is going to happen —"

"What?"

"I'm going to find out right now."

"How?"

"*By being bad.*"

When it dawned upon her that he intended to be wilfully naughty, but nobly for investigation's sake, she interested herself to help him out.

"What kind of bad are you going to be?"

He gazed around the room searching for inspira-

THE DAY OF PRECIOUS PENALTIES

tion to crime and not finding it, for his gentle little soul was moral to inanity. But Regina's eyes glittered hopefully.



"Rex dragged a chair to the mantle, climbed up, and pushed a vase into space"

"Up there are some things we mustn't touch," she murmured in an incidental sort of way, but the guile of the serpent lurked beneath the indifferent words, and Regina's glance rested upon the man-

tel where stood two Chinese vases — fat, bulging things with four handles apiece.

Without so much as a comment, Rex dragged a chair to the mantel, climbed up, and pushed a vase into space.

The crash which it made as it came to pieces on the floor brought Mrs. Pettison quickly upon the scene.

If the truth is to be told, she was distinctly pleased with so opportune a chance to put her new theories into practice, and she pried not at all into causes, taking a vast deal for granted that was not so.

“My little son forgot himself and handled something he has been forbidden to touch,” she said, sorrowfully. “Moreover, he was careless as well as disobedient and let the pretty vase fall. How must we teach him to remember what he is told and make him feel vexed that he has destroyed a thing of beauty?”

After some serious consideration, she went out of the room murmuring, “wait a minute,” and left the twins frightened yet diverted — like pa-

THE DAY OF PRECIOUS PENALTIES
tients reading a comic paper in a dentist's ante-
room.

When she came back she brought with her nothing more awful than a ball of string. A piece of this she slipped through a fragment of vase which chanced to have a handle left intact, and she tied the sinful trophy to Rex's arm, explaining the while the significance of her punishment by telling him that the constant feel of the broken china would distress and shame him and bring him to wish that he had never touched it, while the constant sight of it would grow hateful to him and depress him with sorrow for his wanton destructiveness. With all this, she entwined very prettily the story of the "Ancient Mariner" and the slain albatross which was hung upon the destroyer's neck, symbolizing the weight of sin, and she wound up by telling him that she hoped so to develop his spiritual nature that the mere sense of guilt would soon drag him down more degradingly than any bit of porcelain tied to his arm.

It was really beautifully thought out, and would have been worth money to her if sent to the editor

of *Privileges*, but the twins, knowing they were being "improved," tried to hear as little of it as possible — except that Rex was drawn to "albatross" as something new in fowls.

"How do you spell it?" he asked meekly.

"A-l-b-a-t-r-o-s-s," she spelled curtly, and left the room to prevent the arising of any more worthless side issues.



"He viewed his mark of crime from different angles"

For a short while, Rex stood rigid with stiff arm extended while he viewed his mark of crime from different angles — and with growing approval.

Then he tried walking about, and his pride in it grew as it swung and dangled. He felt it to be not only a pleasantly unusual adornment for a little boy, but a highly entertaining one by reason of the thrilling sound of breaking crockery which it gave out every minute that it knocked against some furniture.

He was soon trotting around the room selecting different material against which to bang his vase-portion, in order to enjoy variety of tones. He had not been so amused, so satisfied, so mentally fed and refreshed in a long while; and Regina, the Innocent, the Unpunished, the Undisgraced, sat in lonely dejection with nothing to do but watch his content.

"Why don't you come and play with me?" at last she asked angrily.

"I can't," replied Rex, in a wee, sweet voice, as from some far realm of bliss. "I'm having too much fun with the — the — the albatross." And he clinked it deliciously against the door-knob.

"I'll get an albatross, too," cried Regina, madened by jealousy; and without a minute's hesitation she jumped to the chair and hurled the remaining vase to the floor.

Rex's stupour of amaze, her own unfeigned horror at the actual consummation of the deed made it impossible for her mother to think this disaster anything but another "accident" — for, of

course, Mrs. Pettison heard the second crash and came in a second time.

Consistency demanded that Regina get a bangle, too, but no poetical selection from Coleridge accompanied this séance.

"You are a very, very naughty little girl," said Mrs. Pettison sharply, and she tied some china to the culprit with quite angry jerks and with a tighter twist than was at all necessary, for the fragment was small — Regina's smash had been thorough.

"Mine's a *baby* albatross," said the smasher complacently, as soon as her mother had left the room.

Now that the children were similarly equipped, they had a lovely time together and put their novel toys to every conceivable and inconceivable test. They began to warm up tenderly to punishments.

"What shall we smash next?" asked Regina, leaning mentally in the direction of a magnificent Satsuma urn in the parlour.

"We'll — we'll be bad some other way," authoritatively said Rex. He had the saner mind and realized that the limitations of smash had been reached.

THE DAY OF PRECIOUS PENALTIES

All sports pall in time, and the twins gradually desisted from their exuberant cracking of furniture, and drew near each other to take hold of hands — a friendly trick of theirs when weary. The contact, bringing their bits of bric-a-brac together with a clash, flecking a splinter from each, recalled to Regina the game which is played with Easter eggs.

“Let’s chip albatrosses,” she said stoically, and sat down on the floor.

Nothing averse, Rex sat down, too, and the war was on. Clash followed clash and chips flew frantically till finally each combatant came out victorious with but a bracelet of string left.

Their mother who had entered and silently witnessed the contest, deemed it wise to take this dis-



“ ‘Let’s chip albatrosses’ ”

posal of the albatross as a matter of course, so she merely made the twins clear up the chips, and then she reminded them that it was time for them to go to their desks; first, to write the usual half page in their copy-books, and, second, to hear each other all the geography questions they could think of. Secretly, she was worried, for seldom before to-day in all their sternly-ordered, meekly-obedient little lives had the twins shown the least trace of naughtiness. She comforted herself with the belief that the worst was now over, for the children, now sedate as dormice, went tractably to work upon their copy-books. Reassured, she left them to themselves again,

L was the letter to which they were devoting their attention, and the page was spaced thus:

"L! Lady! Led by the right! Lady! L."

If the originator of the copy had had any hope of casting a moral glamour over his page by means of the phrase, "Led by the right," that hope was dashed in Regina's case, for she wrote it, "*Leg* by the right." Stems of letters appealed to her as unimportant. After she had laboriously made a round,

THE DAY OF PRECIOUS PENALTIES

fat body, it was all one to her whether she turned it into a "d" or "g."

Moreover she had her own line of progress. She never went across. She went down. She made six "L's," then six "Lady's," then six "Legs" and so on, and was through in less than no time.

"What's an island?" she demanded peremptorily. As far as she was concerned, it was the hour for geography.

Rex, who did all things lovingly and well, was still writing, but he looked up kindly and humoured her.

"An island is land surrounded by water," he said. Then a pained look came on his face as if he loathed the necessity, but he leaned forward, pen in hand, put a blot on Regina's waist — for the land — and drew a scalloped circle around it — for the water. He tapped the picture with his pen and repeated his definition.

It needs to be impressed that heretofore an accidental blot no bigger than a pin point had been sufficient to set them both into sobbing convulsions of fright.

THE PETTISON TWINS

As the island grew upon her, Regina had one brief, embryonic spasm, and then — she understood. Rex was again martyrizng himself.

“What is a lake?” he asked.

He had an apt pupil. Regina seized her pen and stirred it around in the ink-bottle.

“Lake’s water!” gabbled she (blot on Rex’s shirt) “s’rounded b’land,” (Scalloped circle.)

“What’s a strait?”

“A strait” — and here Rex sketched upon his sister’s yoke something resembling a pair of spectacles — “is a channel of water connecting two larger bodies of water. What is a river?”

“A river” — said she, dithering with delight as she ran a zigzag streak of black lightning down his front pleat — “is water flowing through the land. *Whee!* What’s a hill?”

“A hill,” said he, abandoning the pen and dipping his finger in the bottle, “is a low elevation of land.” Here he dabbed a cone-like smudge upon Regina’s shoulder. “What is a mountain?”

“Mountain’s a *high* elevator of land!” (she shrieked, drunken with joy. Inking her whole hand

THE DAY OF PRECIOUS PENALTIES



"This naturally concluded the lesson ; there was no more ink" she streaked him with an "elevator" that reached from his belt to his chin. Now was she frenzied indeed, and hissed meaningly, "What is an OCEAN?"

(He took the dare even though he paled under the magnitude of the sin thrust upon him.)

"The largest body of water," he said, methodically pouring the entire bottle into Regina's lap.

This naturally concluded the lesson; there was no more ink.

"We had better see about this right away," he announced in a businesslike tone. And they sought out their mother.

They found her occupied in rereading the article on "Rational Punishment." They little knew how good a thing it was for themselves that she *was* so occupied — occupied, too, so serenely and deeply that she failed to notice their approach until Rex murmured, "Mama, something has happened."

She looked up and, catching sight of their really awful condition, was literally stunned and dumb-stricken. All she could do was to wave them away from her. When speech finally returned to her, it was so far beneath the occasion that it sounded tame.

"Get out of my sight as quickly as possible," she begged, "before I say or do what I should not. Oh, do go! Later, when we are all calmer, we will talk over this frightful occurrence; for rest assured I shall demand a full explanation. Not that your punishment will wait till then — no, indeed. I shall attend to that at once and severely. Listen! *I forbid you to change those disgraceful garments.* You shall

take your outing in them, you shall see visitors in them — if visitors come — you shall go to the supper-table in them, you shall wear them till bedtime, even if your hearts and mine break with the humiliation. Now go. Immediately.”

When they left the room, Mrs. Pettison burst into tears over the problem. The twins did not know that, of course, and danced away perfectly happy; if there was one thing they hated worse than another it was their afternoon raiment of white piqué: The stuff was always starched as stiff as tin, and it creased if it was looked at cross-eyed. When creased it was done for. If the twins had the ill-luck to sit on a peach-stone or kneel on a blackberry, they were in the worst sort of a fix. And to think they could wear their nice, comfortable, messy suits all afternoon! To think that they could actually go out in them and tell everything to all the other little boys and girls! It was too good to be true. And why should not visitors know about it? The more the merrier. And as for supper — again, why not? Was not their father going to be absent? Of course he was, thank

THE PETTISON TWINS

heaven! Yes, really and really it was too good to be true.

The ensuing hour was positively the happiest they remembered. When they were forced to go out with Catherine, the "help," it was she who suffered,



"The ensuing hour was positively the happiest they remembered"

not they. They strutted to the utmost, while she chased desperately to have it over and done with.

"Such a holy show!" she kept muttering.

"Why, Catherine, you're not the holy show, we are," they sweetly insisted, but all the same she hurried them home and left them to take most of

their outing on the front steps. That was not so bad, either, for they could point out their adornments in dumb sign to all their passing cronies. They sat there basking in rare contentment.

When it came to be the neighbourhood supper-time and the street grew dull, Rex thought out another excitement.

"Sister, I begin to see how this thing works, do you?"

"What thing works?"

"This new punishment. It works this way — when we do something bad we have to keep on doing it."

"Well?" said Regina listlessly.

"Well, we'll go now *and steal some jam.*"

Which they immediately did. It was not hard to manage, with Catherine making disappearances into the dining-room to put supper on the table. Of course, discovery was swift, but then, discovery was their aim.

"Some bad angel possesses you," cried Mrs. Pet-tison, despairingly, but still clinging to her ideals. "You think you want jam — I'll prove to you

how mistaken you are — come to the table, and see!”

A large dish of jam was set before them, and their beef broth was removed. When they understood that they were to help themselves plentifully to jam, they wondered if they had not fallen into fairyland. Requesting bread, they were denied it.

“Nothing but jam,” said Mrs. Pettison sternly, her sympathetic stomach recoiling from the fearful fate.

The twins perceptibly cheered and tucked into the jam at a great rate. They had aimed at this happiness, but the result exceeded belief. The next course would have been sandwiches of stale bread, sparsely buttered and served with weak cocoa. This, too, they were mercifully spared.

“Help yourselves to jam,” ordered their mother, in the tone of an executioner. The twins’ whole beings mellowed under the affliction and they stowed away jam enough for a long winter.

This method was persevered in during the meal and at each added prohibition, the twins cheered further and took more jam. At last, Mrs. Pettison,

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fearing that she was becoming barbarous in her cruelty, offered them forgiveness by saying,

"The dessert is cold rice pudding; you may make your choice between it and the sickening sweet stuff I have forced upon you."

"I'll take jam," said Rex gently.



"'I'll take jam,' said Rex gently"

"More jam," said Regina, the greedy glitter in her eye undimmed.

They rose from the table oozing contentment from every pore, and Mrs. Pettison wearily kept her seat to ponder upon the situation.

Out in the hall —

THE PETTISON TWINS

"Regina, didn't that jam make you thirsty?"

"Aw'fly."

"Come into the pantry and we'll open a bottle of grape juice."

But they had been overheard and pursued, and while they were trying to unscrew the cap of the bottle, the wrath fell — and the shameless, degrading irrationality of that wrath would have pained the whole editorial staff of *Privileges*.

"Biff!" on Regina's ear, and "Baff!" on Rex's, and then they were jerked up by their collars and rattled around in the air a while.

That these processes were dangerous to tympanums and spinal columns, Mrs. Pettison well knew. Temporarily, however, she failed to remember.

"You are a naughty — disobedient — exasperating — bad-hearted — thieving little pair!" she said, by way of making confidants of her children.

She told them so much more about themselves that they could hardly believe it. They had not leisure to listen to it all, being so very busy attempting to shelter various portions of their anatomy. Sweep! and Regina found herself balancing upon her

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mother's knee in a swimming attitude, and — well, she was given a lesson.

Swoop! Rex took her place, and also received a lesson. A perfectly unpunctuated tale of accusations accompanied all this, and "arbitrary" was the last thing thought of by any of the parties.

Finally, the twins felt themselves hoisted as upon derricks and swirled along the passage to a dark room where they were inconsiderately and ungently dumped, the door being banged upon them.

"And at the next atom of trouble, I'll treat you to a double dose of this!" was the sybillic utterance which floated in to them.

When they had wept themselves almost to a pulp and their sobs came a little further apart, Rex's broken voice crept from somewhere in the darkness.

"Regina, I think we'd better be good."

"I thought it first," she hiccoughed.

And since it was upon her that the chastening hand first fell, perhaps she did.

THE END

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